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BY THE REV. J. G. H. BARRY, D. D.

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MEDITATIONS

ON THE

OFFICE AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

BY

THE REV. J. G. H. BARRY, D.D.

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I.

THE BEING AND WORSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

I.

MEDITATION

MEDITATIONS ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

MEDITATION I.

THE BEING AND WORSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Listen to the Word of God—

"IN the beginning God created the heavens and the earth; and the earth was waste and desolate; and the Spirit of God brooded upon the face of the waters."

Let us picture—

The abyss of chaos. The seething mass is slowly evolving under the action of elemental forces. It is a world in the process of formation. What science sees here is force and matter. It strikes out the first words of Genesis, and says simply, "In the beginning the earth was waste and desolate." Other human thought will see here the manifestation of an ultimate force, impersonal, unconscious, finally to attain self-consciousness and personality in man.

Let us consider, first—

That religion can supply that which science

cannot find, the secret of the evolutionary process. What science can only name force, and can only define as law, religion can name God. Or more definitely, God the Holy Spirit.

The principle of order that is directing the evolution of the world is the Holy Spirit of God. At the proper moment He will bring into this weltering chaos, life, the supreme mystery. On this dark background of matter is revealed to us the Holy Spirit, brooding, bringing order and life. We watch the process. Out of the chaos we see a cosmos emerging; an orderly world unfolded. And, seeing, we confess the Lord and Life-giver.

Let us consider, second—

That human life and human society are always upon the borders of chaos, ready to slip back. The anarchic elements in society are with difficulty held back. The destructive element in life, what we call sin, is pressing us. We try to restrain these destructive forces and to counteract them. We seek more perfect social organization. We resort to legislation. We place our hopes in education. But behind, chaos looms dark and threatening.

Have any of these things been effectual in your own case? What is it that prevents your life

from becoming chaotic? The respect for social order? The pressure of external law? Your education? No; the power of order. The Holy Spirit. You know that your life will—is always ready to—slip from control. But back of it is a power that can and will restrain, if you permit.

And so let us pray—

For a deep sense of the danger that always lurks near us; the danger of a disordered life with all control abandoned; with no will but self-will. Let us pray for the aid of the Holy Spirit to order our lives.

O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee; mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

I am to speak to you of God the Holy Ghost. It seems a presumptuous thing to do. God is spirit, "and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." And so they that speak of Him. One feels the need of being very spiritual. But a mission to teach is committed to one; and one must speak, not as one would but as one can. I will speak, then, not trying to speak of

myself, but as I have learned of others; and speak trusting to the blessed Spirit Himself to take my words, and kindle them in your minds and hearts.

One writing a book upon the Holy Spirit, some years ago, put on his title-page, *Ignoto Deo;* to the unknown God. He did so feeling that effective knowledge of the Holy Ghost was largely lost from Christendom. Of Christendom it might almost be said, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." "I know," an educated gentleman said to me, "what you mean by the Father; and I know what you mean by the Son; but I do not know what you mean by the Holy Ghost." I myself—and you—have heard many sermons dealing with the Incarnation and the Church and the Sacraments in which there was an utter ignoring of the Holy Ghost.

Of course, if we take up a formal treatise on theology, we do find recognition of the being and work of the Holy Spirit. But even then, it is wonderful how formal and perfunctory and little detailed the treatment is. One cannot help the thought that the Holy Spirit has meant very little to the theologian.

Or examine our devotional formularies. Look through your Prayer Book. There, at any rate,

we should expect adequate devotional expression of our relation to the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. But hardly at all are we there led to Him as the object of our worship. There is the *Veni Creator,* and a collect or two, and that is all.

It is a little better in the books that are provided for private devotional use. There we find a litany and some more prayers. But one cannot but feel that there is a miserable inadequacy in the treatment of the office and work of the Holy Ghost throughout the Western Church.

All this means something. It means a very serious gap in our religious training. It means that little time is given in our meditations to the attempt to appropriate to our spiritual profit a most important region of spiritual truth. It means that in our prayers we fail to realize our relation to the Holy Spirit. It means that there is a Person of the Blessed Trinity with whom we do not appreciate our relation.

And yet we say glibly enough, the Father is God, and the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. We believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Life-giver.

The neglect of Christendom is not theoretical, but practical. And is not that the most terrible of all neglects? What profit is there to acknowl-

edge with the intellect and straightway turn our backs upon the practice?

It often seems that there are truths in religion that men ignore, not because they disbelieve them, but because they do not know what to do with them. They are passed over merely. For instance, the truth of brotherhood. It can't be said that Christians do much that is practical with that. They do not exactly pass over it, for they talk a good deal about it; but it can't be said that the average parish makes much out of it. I don't know of any parish in the Church that it would occur to one to describe as a brotherhood. Or the power of intercession: what do we make of that? The world would no doubt have been converted long ago if Christendom had known how to pray. But just announce in a parish a special service of intercession, or a celebration with special intention, and you will get some idea of the degree in which the power of prayer has taken hold upon life.

And so this truth about the Holy Spirit: what has Christendom ever done with that? Where is ceaseless prayer made to Him? How many of you pray to Him daily? To how many of you is He the chief factor in the development of your spiritual life?

The Holy Spirit is God. Let us get hold of that. The third Person of the Blessed Trinity. We will not stop to enquire what person means; it were easy to befog ourselves in speculation. Practically, and so far as we need to care, a person is a living being with whom we may have relations. When we are dealing with the Holy Spirit we are not concerned with a force, or an influence, but a person. If I may so say, a person with a history, of whom I may learn, and to whom I may speak.

I think it well to hold fast to that side of things, otherwise our thought tends to lose itself in vagueness. We see the work that we are wont to attribute to the Father. When we say, I believe in God the Father, Maker of heaven and earth, we lift our eyes and the work of the Father is all about us. The beauty of the world fills us with joy and reverence; its awfulness and mystery oppress us. We catch the glint of the light on the sweeping lawn; we hear the murmur of the twilight breeze in the reeds; we smell the fragrance of the flowers in the dawn; or we stand before the majesty of the mountains and see the lightning flash about their peaks. Yes, we believe in a God in and behind nature, and we have learned to call Him Father. And we have perfectly before us

the work of the Son. It is an old story to us; the story of Bethlehem and Nazareth and Calvary. We feel the power and trace the hand of Incarnate God through every subsequent page of history. He is among us in His Body the Church. We adore His veiled Presence in the blessed sacrament of the altar. But the work of the Holy Spirit, though it be also in things familiar to us, though neither creation nor Church nor sacraments are without Him, is still a less visible and sensible work: we are ordinarily less impressed by it. The mind which cannot escape the appeal of nature or the appeal of the Cross, may easily escape the appeal of the Spirit—for these things are spiritually discerned.

There is no truth that we can afford to ignore or dispense with. The spirit of ignorance and neglect is the spirit of narrowness. Ignorance always means limitation. To be sure, the universe is so big, the provinces of knowledge are so extended, that we are obliged to limit ourselves in some direction. We cannot possess all knowledge. Some of us stand outside the fields of science and art and literature and look longingly in. We realize, with something of bitterness it may be, how much there is in life that is desirable and

beautiful that is not for us. But that is all the more reason for not excluding from life anything that is vital, anything that is eternal in its issues. However else we must narrow ourselves, we cannot afford to be narrowed in our religion.

It is characteristic of a narrow religion, not that it is definite and dogmatic, as is absurdly supposed; not that it asserts that two and two are four, uncharitably ignoring the people who think that they may be three or five; but a narrow religion (it is the mark of all sectarianism) is one that omits to reckon with essential elements; which over-emphasizes and exaggerates the importance of certain truths at the expense of others. Every truth of God has its importance; an importance, not as a part of a system, but as a factor in life. If there were no other, it were a sufficient answer to the superficial remark, "What matter what one believes?" that the failure to believe all that God has revealed, stunts and maims life. All dogma has its practical effect. It can hardly be maintained that failure to believe in prayer makes no difference, including the belief in the actions that properly result from those beliefs. Neither is it without very far-reaching influence on life and character if we fail to believe in the Holy

Spirit in such wise as to have intimate personal relations with Him. Leaving such belief out of life, its whole tone and color are affected.

Can anyone fail to see the effects of such neglect in the spiritual and intellectual phenomena of the time? It is not peculiar to any time that there should be unbelief and misbelief. Every age has its unhappy souls that ignorance or prejudice or sin has led astray. But there has certainly been no age in which there has been so widespread and terrible a revolt against the fundamental principles of all religion; in which an anti-religion of naturalism and materialism has been created. This revolt is not against this or that claim or doctrine of religion, but against all belief in the supernatural. And where so utter an unbelief has not found place, yet a definite religious belief has been displaced by a religious sentiment—sentiment of a vague and misty quality. What is the cause of this, if it be not a neglect of the Personal Spirit of God Himself? The failure to reckon with the Holy Spirit as a living factor in life revenges itself in a blindness to all spiritual things.

If we recognize unbelief as a danger to society or to ourselves, how can we better fight it than by making sure of our own relation to Him? By

clearing our thoughts as to His operation in life? We are all more or less influenced by unbelief. Doubts and fears and hesitations beset us. There are times when the light goes out and we grope and stumble on our way. It does not seem plain to us what we should do. We have doubts of our vocation. Perhaps we are making life unnecessarily hard; being too strict; cutting ourselves off from too much. This or that point of belief or its application looks dim and uncertain. It is, in little, the crisis of modern society, no longer resting quite undisturbed on the basis of faith.

What we need is a surer touch of God; a deeper sense of the reality of God in life.

It seems to me that we shall get that through a firmer and better defined belief in the Holy Spirit.

How? Why, surely, in the first place by prayer. Prayer is the one certain method of making God a reality to us. It is a very wonderful thing—a true prayer. To kneel down and speak out into the silence with a perfect certainty of being heard. And if from prayer to God we can go on to prayer to each Person in God, we create a feeling of intimate personal relation to the Person to whom we pray.

We ought, I am sure, to address more prayers

directly to the Holy Spirit. Every day's prayers should contain some that are personal to Him. When we recall how great a part He plays in our life; that in particular He is the indwelling Spirit —the Spirit of holiness—the strengthener of our weakness and the guider of our thought, it is strange that we have ever missed this.

Prayer will help us much, ordinary prayer. But the prayer of meditation will help us more. Study, leading to an intellectual recognition of the truth, leaves us too often cold and unmoved; but meditation, leading to a devotional appreciation of truth, brings us to action. If, then, we could take the truths Holy Scripture reveals to us of the Holy Spirit, and make them for a time the center of our devotional life; if one by one with devout prayer to Him we could let our minds dwell upon them, His place in our life would become much plainer to us. We should feel, I am sure, the waste places of our life being watered and made fruitful. We should call this forgotten and neglected God out of the darkness, and He would reveal Himself to us in all His beauty and power.

The neglect of God by Christians is such a pathetic thing in any case. And the heart of God feels it so. What a sad note rings through many passages of the Old Testament. "Oh, that My

people would have hearkened unto Me!" "Oh, My people, what have I done unto thee, wherein have I wearied thee?" I can never read these wailing cries of God over His wayward children without pain and shame. That God should ask wherein He has wearied us! And the New Testament takes up that same cry: "Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how oft would I have gathered thee, and ye would not." "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." Above all that tumultuous cry about the judgment-seat, "Away with Him, away with Him!"

Certainly the history of Christendom is that it has neglected the Holy Spirit more than it has neglected the Father or the Son. But—did you ever think of it?—the Holy Spirit never complains. He just grieves, driven out of our souls.

Do we not owe reparation for this? I sometimes think that we ought to institute special services of reparation to God the Holy Ghost, and special intercession for His pardon.

There ought to be present to us an increasing sense of the value of the spiritual life. By the spiritual life I mean the exercise of that set of faculties of our nature which help us to know God and to understand the purposes of God—what we call the spiritual faculties. I often think that we

might express the essence of the spiritual life something in this way: that it is an attempt to get God's point of view in regard to life and to embody that in our own experience. It is so difficult to take and maintain the divine point of view, not because it is difficult to find, but because it runs so counter to much of our own accepted standards of life. We know perfectly well the value that God the Holy Ghost, speaking through Holy Scripture, places on wordly advancement or success: upon wordly comfort or happiness. We know that He regards these things as strictly subordinate to the peace and friendship of God. But we treat that as merely a pious form of expression that we are not to take too seriously. The result is that the Bible becomes an unreal book, recommending to us things that we have not the remotest intention of acting upon. We read its sentences as the utterances of an ancient book dealing with a world with which we have little concern. It was probably all right for apostles and primitive Christians, but it is curiously out of touch with the life of the twentieth century. "Let your conversation be in heaven." "Ye are not in the flesh but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of

God." "Whereby are given unto us exceeding reat and precious promises: that by these ye ight be partakers of the divine nature." What o we make out of such sentences? Anything? t is pious to acquiesce in them, but practically hat do we do with them? And yet it is indisutable that they meant something to the writers, nd that they expected them to mean something to eir readers. They both alike understood them be a simple and natural and practical statement f the revealed truth of God.

Now while an ideal that we are striving to nbody in our lives, even though we have so far riven with indifferent success, is a serviceable ing; and while a truth we are striving to make nfluential, though we have only partially approriated it, is vastly stimulating; an ideal or truth hich we acknowledge as an ideal and truth, but ttempt to do nothing with, is excessively harmul, for it puts us on a basis of unreality, and akes us unconscious hypocrites. Our Prayer ook services have been criticised from this point f view; that they put into the mouth of people evotional language which does not express anying in their lives, with the consequence of unality. There is no doubt of that danger. It is very grave thing to habituate ourselves to the

expression of devotional states in the form of words, which we permit to be forms merely, and do not strive to make actual in experience; to confess our sins in terms of deep and humble contrition when we have no sense of sin at all and would be angry if anyone out of church implied that they thought us just what we have told God that we thought ourselves; to take upon our lips words of fervent thanksgiving when there is no thankfulness in our hearts; to sing hymns that imply in every line a heart overflowing with praise that echoes no reality.

Yet the Church cannot very well avoid exposing us to just this danger. In its construction of the formulas of common worship it must set forth the ideal of worship. It must offer its own worship as the Body of Christ. It must show us what is the highest type of worship. It cannot come down to the level of an individual's attainment; it must try to draw the individual up to the level of its own perfection. In other words it must do just what the Holy Scripture does, show us the most that God requires of us—show us the perfect life.

Now a spiritual life—to return to that—will strive to catch this, the divine point of view, and expend its energies in the effort to realize it.

Or we may look at the matter from another oint of view. The spiritual life is that life vhich is lived in accordance with spiritual motive nd principle. It consciously takes that ideal of fe unfolded in the New Testament as its guide. t seeks the things that are above. The things its eart is set upon are the fruits of the Spirit—love, oy, peace, and the rest. It has learned to value hings at their true worth as the expression in it f the life of God. It is not specially concerned vith the avoidance of sin, that is an elementary tage of experience, but it is greatly concerned vith the acquirement of virtues. It understands hat to be pure means a good deal more than the voidance of sins of impurity; that to be peaceful neans more than not to make trouble. The posi-ve qualities of the Christian life mean more and nore to it, because they are more and more per-eived to be supernatural things, the reflection in s of the life of God Himself. God, it is learned, s not a law outside of us commanding us, but a Person within our souls guiding us. "Ye are the emples of the Living God."

And that God is God the Holy Ghost. The piritual life is not our thoughts and will acting n accordance with rules, but our thoughts and will urrendered to the will of God. The spiritual life

is the life of God the Holy Ghost in our soul. It is the outcome of a self-surrender to Him. This self-surrender is the true worship of God; for all true worship is sacrifice, and all true sacrifice is in the last analysis self-sacrifice. The complete worship our Lord offered was His self-surrender to the death of the cross. Our worship rises to completeness as we join our wills to His in completeness of self-oblation.

No life can rise to this which approaches religion as a system of rules to be kept, and not as an oblation to be offered. We have to keep rules indeed; such is the imperfection of our human nature. But we are apt to make the rules the whole, and on the basis of them to chaffer and barter as to just how much or how little is necessary to do. Our religion grows commercial in its tone. People say, "I don't think I am required to do that. I have done enough; let someone else do that." That is the very opposite of our Lord's direction, "When ye have done all say, 'We are unprofitable servants.'" This spirit of material calculation as to the limits of God's requirements is a sign that we have not at all understood the meaning of religion.

True religion never weighs and measures and calculates its service. It understands that the

limits of its powers are the limits of God's requirements. What God desires is not ours but ourselves. The soul that is truly possessed by God the Holy Ghost will experience no hesitations, no recoil from the divine demands, but will be eager to spend and be spent in the divine service.

This is a high ideal? Undoubtedly; it is the ideal of sanctity. But can you honestly say that it is higher than the ideal of Christian life expressed in the New Testament; or that there is there expressed any other or lower ideal? It is too high for human nature? It is just the plain conception of the Christian life which St. Paul embodies in all his epistles. Those epistles were not written for some ideal people, they are not descriptions of a spiritual Utopia, but they were letters of practical advice and instruction addressed to living men and women just emerging from heathenism. The trouble is that the modern world has calmly thrust aside the common ideal of the Christian life as the New Testament writers presented it, and substituted for it an ideal of ordinary decency of conduct. To the New Testament writers the spiritual life is a supernatural thing. It begins in an action of God, it is sustained by the action of God, it ends in the

enjoyment of the unveiled presence of God. They never dreamed of its being merely the system of human conduct to which the modern world has reduced it.

And we may certainly say this of it: That it is a thing infinitely worth striving for. If there be a voice of God the Holy Ghost in Holy Scripture offering us an ideal of an holy life; if there be a presence of God the Holy Ghost in the soul of the believer offering the power to sustain that life; certainly it is worth our highest endeavors to attain it. The question presently important is not how much we may have attained this now, or may hope to attain it in the near future; but the deeply important question is: Do we catch the point of view and think it worth while to strive at all? What we wish to be and hope to be and try to be is much more important than what we are at present. Our future is enfolded in the direction that our lives are taking, not in the amount of their attainment. Our ideals earnestly striven after are more significant than our accomplishment. The feeble and imperfect Christian who is going on, no matter at what expense of labor, is more worthy of his vocation than the self-complacent Christian who congratulates himself that

he has done enough or the disheartened Christian who turns back because the road that opens before him is rough and unknown.

Let us listen then for the voice of the Holy Spirit, expecting that He will call us to hard things, but expecting, too, that He will make the hard things easy because He will ever lend us His strength. It is wonderful how easy the way grows before us when once we have made the surrender of our wills. The things of the spiritual life are difficult because we think them so. They are not difficult when we think of them with the thoughts of God. They are not difficult when the power by which they are accomplished is the power that God Himself provides, the power of His Holy Spirit.

O Holy Spirit, Love of God, who proceedest from the Almighty Father and His most blessed Son, infuse Thy grace most plentifully into our hearts. Come Thou and dwell in these souls which long to be Thy holy temple. Heal the lurking distempers of our hearts. Pierce them through with the dart of Thy love. Kindle in us such a holy fire that it may flame out in a bright and devout zeal, and burning up the dross of all

earthly affections, may possess and purify our whole spirit, soul, and body; Grant this, O blessed Spirit, for the sake of Jesus Christ our only Lord and Saviour.

II.

THE BEING AND WORSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

MEDITATION II.

THE BEING AND WORSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Let us listen to the words of St. Paul—

"THE very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Let us picture to ourselves—

St. Paul, writing to those whom he has converted. He insists at times upon the personal element. "Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with my own hand." The signature of me, Paul. We seem to see him absorbed in his work, his mind intent on how he may best present the truth. Then again he insists upon the element of Revelation: "By Revelation He made known unto me the mystery." We seem to see him listening to the voice of God and writing what God says to him. He is wonderful as he sits there writing words which shall stir and guide the Church till the end of time.

Let us consider, first—

That he is bringing all the powers that God gives him to the service of the Giver. His idea of service is not contemplation alone, or action alone; it is not that any part of his life belongs to God, but his whole being, body, soul, and spirit. He serves God with his body by the offering of it in the pain of travail, in fastings, in bonds and imprisonment, in scourging and stoning, in fighting beasts in the arena. He serves God with his intellect: all those impassioned writings of his which testify to a mind burning to make known the truth are the evidence. What marvellously deep comprehension there is in his writings of mind and purpose of God! He serves God with his spirit: what depth of spiritual insight, what height of spiritual aspiration, what fervor of spiritual love is revealed in these letters! We feel, do we not, there is no division here; he is wholly Christ's, as he prays we may be.

Let us consider, again—

That any service of God that aims at perfection must be thus entire. Our vocation as Christians means that we put ourselves thus at the disposal of God to work His holy will. Ourselves wholly: body, intellect, spirit—we are all God's.

Are we doing this? Are we recognizing the obligation to complete consecration? Is my body serving God? Are my feet swift in His service, my hands eager in His work, my eyes seeking to see Him everywhere, my ears alert to catch His words, my lips zealous to tell Him, my knees bowed in adoration? Is my intellect at the service of God? Is my mind striving better to understand His Revelation, the truth of His kingdom, the precepts of His Church? Do I serve God with my spirit? Do I strive to develop my spiritual capacity, to know Him through spiritual sympathy, to worship Him in spirit and in truth?

Let us pray—

For the power of complete consecration. Pray for wisdom to so use God's gifts that they may be returned to Him with usury.

Receive, O Lord, my entire liberty; my body, my mind, my spirit. Whatever I have, Thou hast bestowed upon me. To Thee I give back all and surrender all, to be governed entirely by Thy will. Grant me only Thy grace and Thy love and I am rich enough nor do I desire anything more.

We have to consider the truth that the Spirit

of the Lord filleth all things. The work of God the Holy Ghost is not confined to the things that we call spiritual. God the Father is the source of all things, the Creator. God the Son is the Mediator, God the Holy Ghost is the Administrator. All things are from the Father, through the Son and by the Holy Ghost. We have then to try to appreciate this action of the Holy Spirit in relation to the whole of creation.

We find Him first at the creation brooding over the chaos. He is there as the Life-giver. All life proceeds from Him. From the intelligent life of man to the life of the tiniest flower that blooms by the wayside, all is His. From the life of the highest archangel to the life of the damned in hell, all exists because of Him. Nature is an expression of His power. The butterfly that flits through the sunlight, the lion roaring after his prey, the grass that clothes the meadows, the trees that cover the mountain, are expressions of the life of the Holy Spirit. And not only does He give the life, but day by day He sustains it. His withdrawal is death. All things depend for their existence upon His continued action in them. "When Thou takest away their breath, they die, and are turned again to their dust."

What a wonderful conception that gives us of the world about us. "Truly God is in this place and we knew it not." The natural order acquires an awfulness and sanctity. It becomes in a new sense God's world. God is not outside the world, acting through law; God is in the World acting by His own personal presence. We do not need to confound God with the world, but neither must we for fear of that banish God from the world.

We need to dwell upon this truth to-day, for the danger of disassociating the world and God, or even bringing an antagonism between them is a present danger. Our conceptions of law are apt to lead us to a thought of the world as almost independent of God; set going by Him, perhaps, but not now interfered with. His relation to it is much the same as that of a clock-maker to a clock, so we feel that whatever may have been the original relation of God to creation, He is now a negligible factor. We study the world regardless of any divinity therein.

Or there is this other danger, that we imagine an actual antagonism between the world and God. Matter and spirit are conceived as opposites. It is the old error of Eastern speculation that is always present in some form in human thought. We feel it perhaps most in a cer-

tain dread of matter; a feeling of its unspiritualness, as though it were a degradation to God to act through it. But that matter should be the vehicle of spiritual action lies at the very root of the Christian conception of the world. It underlies the whole sacramental system. It is assumed by the Incarnation itself. And yet we find some good Christians shrinking from a complete surrender to the sacraments as the normal means of spiritual action. We shall have to recur to this perhaps in another connection. For the present it is enough to point out that it were best counteracted by a realization of the operation of the Holy Spirit through the natural order of the world, giving to it a certain sanctity.

We follow up the development of life and at last we meet man and a new phenomenon—intellectual life. The Bible has never hesitated—as how should it?—to ascribe this, too, to the operation of the Holy Ghost. All ability, of whatever kind, it regards as proceeding from the same source. When therefore there is need of a man of artistic ability to adorn the sanctuary, it is Bezaleel who is indicated: "A man filled with the Spirit of God, in all wisdom and understanding, and in knowledge, and in all

manner of workmanship." We retain the same idea in form, though, I am afraid, without attaching any definite meaning to it, when we speak of a work as *inspired*. We ought to mean that genius and pratical ability are the gifts of God the Holy Ghost. The wonderful power of the human mind to think, to plan, to originate; all the insight of the philosopher, all the skill of the craftsman, all the perception of beauty of form and color of the artist, all the sense of harmony of the musician—these have their origin in the action of the Holy Spirit. Man thinks and plans and executes because of Him.

We are so apt to ignore all that; to think that because we can see in some degree the immediate antecedents of an event; because we can partly understand the laws or the causes producing it, we have sufficiently accounted for it. But is it so? Does there not always remain an element, and that the most important one, unaccounted for? We know perhaps the laws of sight; how the light waves are transmitted through the ether and affect the nerves of the eye and how the sensation is transmitted to the brain. But does that adequately account for the sense of beauty that I experience when I see the

opal tints of the dawn-sky, the changing lights of the sunset, the gorgeous painting of forest leaves? I know about the laws of sound, but how does that account for the joy or sadness of my soul as I listen to the roll of the organ or the wailing of violins? A man may master all the technique of painting, but there is a power not technical in a head by Holbein or a landscape by Corot, There is an ultimate power in the creative intellect that mere training will not give. There is a perceptive power in the human being that education will not account for. We must widen our formulas sufficiently to allow for the action of God.

And if there is an action of God on and through our intellectual nature, it results, does it not, that there is a responsibility to God for our use of it? There is no gift without a corresponding responsibility.

There is a responsibility then for our use of the natural order, the material gifts of life. That haunting temptation of an opposition between the natural and the spiritual, the sacred and the profane; that old temptation to divide life into religious and secular, meets us again here. It meets us in the implicit assumption that the things of this world are ours and may be used simply

we will for our own service or for our own
easure. Our time is our own; our wealth we
ve won for ourselves.

But if I am right in the view of the world that
have tried to explain, there is a service of grati-
de and thanksgiving by which these, which are
e to God, are to be consecrated to Him. "All
ings come of Thee, O Lord, and of Thine
vn have we given Thee." The Old Testament
nception is so much truer than our modern one.
is notably expressed in the canticle *Benedicite*
mnia Opera. What an outburst of praise goes
to God from all creation through that wonder-
l hymn, "O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye
e Lord; praise Him and magnify Him for-
er." And what a lesson of the proper attitude
f the creation toward God. These material
ings which lie so richly about us; the earth and
s fruits; the powers of nature and *their* fruits,
we have learned to gather them; they are all to
rendered back with thanksgiving; they are to
made to serve God. And is not that one of
e deep lessons of the sacraments, that the
aterial world has its part and ministry in
orship? It is the fruit of the earth—the fruit
at has been rendered back to man's labor—that
offered to God and by Him consecrated to be

the medium of spiritual grace; God associating Himself with matter which is so closely associated with us, that He may make known in us His spiritual power.

The service of creation, that is a far-reaching thought. The sanctity of the common things of life, that were fruitful of a new perception of our nearness to God. It helps us to understand this among other things: Why God has not ordained for man as his method of worship a mere contemplation of the spirit but worship through material acts; why man should express by his outward gesture and deed the thought of his heart and the aspiration of his spirit; why he should kneel in prayer and stand in praise; why he should confess his faith in the sign of the cross; why he should acknowledge God's presence by the prostration of his body. All ritual acts have their ultimate justification in the service and consecration of the creature. The creature is made to serve and acknowledge God in the harmonies of music, in the splendor of vestments, the glow of lights, and the perfume of incense. What men are pleased to call a spiritual worship, by which they mean a worship from which the material creation has been withdrawn as much as possible, contains, albeit unconsciously, the subtle error

that denies the relation of material things to their Maker. It ignores the fact that by one side of us we spring from the material; that creation was involved in our fall and our redemption; that it presently lies under bondage awaiting the consummation of the kingdom of God. "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."

Worship is the act of the whole man. It is not the immortal spirit of man acknowledging the supremacy of God, but the surrender of the whole man, body and soul and spirit, to the will of God. We need to offer our whole selves. A complete act of worship calls for the use of the intellect which sets before us the object and nature of the act we perform. It calls for the energy of the spirit which embraces the object of worship as an object of desire and love. It calls for the action of the body, which by its reverent posture sets forth and symbolizes the due attitude of the creature in the presence of its Creator. The four and twenty Elders in the Revelation of St. John, who seem to represent redeemed humanity worshipping in the presence of God, fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth forever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to re-

ceive glory and honor and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created."

I sometimes feel that one reason why we fail to appreciate the relation of the natural world to God, and what is due from it to Him, is a misunderstanding of the frequent warnings in the New Testament against worldliness. Surely those do not imply any depreciation of the material world, or any hint of opposition between God and His creation. Still less do they imply any view of the material facts of life as though they were to be disregarded as much as possible as being a hindrance to spiritual activity. Worldliness is not using the world, but abusing it. What I am pleading for is the use. St. John, more than any one else, insists on the dangers of worldliness. But what does he say? "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world"—what? The material things? Not at all. "All that is in the world, the *lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,* is not of the Father." What constitutes the danger is the informing spirit we put into the facts of existence. Our attitude toward them is what constitutes

their worldliness or the contrary. That spirit of lust and covetousness and pride by which our immortal nature is made to be subordinate to what we can presently get out of the world. Where our treasure is there will our heart be also. The ever present danger is lest we make the world our object and end; lest the glamor of its pleasures and the fascination of its rewards absorb us.

And how shall we better escape this danger than by the distinct realization of the possibility of a wise and holy use of the creature? Than by a conviction that we can make it an instrument in the service of God? That we may worship God through it? The Israelite rendered the first-fruits of his ground and the firstlings of his flock as a kind of consecration of the whole. And it is through due and reverent use of the creature that we shall gain the same end, putting the whole of God's gifts back at His disposal, understanding that worship is an offering, is sacrifice; and that this old dark and dead matter which seems so hopelessly unspiritual may become in consecrated souls and willing hands the instrument of a worship truly spiritual because it has realized the intimate relation of God to all His creation.

Let us look at another side of our subject. I

said that the Holy Spirit acts through and is the Creator of our intellectual life. There results from that fact the obligation of a certain realization of and allegiance to Him in the operation of the intellectual nature. Sins of the intellect will assume a grave character as we think of them as an alienation of a power due to God the Holy Spirit from Him.

To-day people are inclined to resent the implication that there are such things as intellectual sins. That of course implies an assertion of intellectual irresponsibility. Now it ought to be perfectly plain that we are responsible to God for the use of all His gifts: which I suppose means that we are responsible for what we have *willed* to do with them. If there is anything in our nature which is out of control of the will, then we are not responsible for that. There are two seemingly contradictory propositions frequently on men's lips to-day: "I cannot help what I think;" and, "I have a right to think what I please; thought is free." But if we have the right to think what we please, then we can help what we think. But I have no disposition to play with phrases. It is clear enough that thought, by which I do not mean vagrant fancies, or stale prejudices, but the deliberate attempt to

arrive at an intellectual conclusion about any matter, is a moral act, which has the consent of the will and which we are free to do or not to do. In one sense it is true that we can think what we will, *i.e.,* we can give our attention to what subjects we will. But it can hardly be contended that this is a mere innocent exercise of the intellect and the imagination. If we sit down and allow ourselves to brood over an injury till our souls are aflame with hatred and malice, it can hardly be contended that it is an innocent amusement because we do not go on to vent our malice in word or deed. The anarchist who convinces himself that social injustice is such that he ought to attempt its remedy by assassination, surely does not then first become guilty of sin when he throws the bomb which destroys innocent life. The person who defiles the soul with impure imaginations does not first become a sinner when they are consummated. It is quite evident indeed that sins are bred in our thought; are in the first place intellectual acts. Hence the responsibility to select our thoughts; to attend only to such thoughts as are pure and noble and wholesome. My habitual tone of thought is the best index to what I really am. I can be known to my fellows only by my habitual forms of expression;

but I am known to myself and to God by my thought. There then is the basis of my true self-judgment. It may very well happen that my expression does not well represent my thought. As a Christian I adopt a certain form of expression. I treat religion with reverence and I speak of holy things with respect. I profess my belief in the facts of the Creed. But it may be that internally I give no attention to religion; that my mind is completely occupied by other things; that I have no spiritual aspiration at all. Certainly this inner temper of mind and habit of thought and not my external attitude of propriety represents my real self.

But again: We cannot help what we think. It is sometimes impossible to avoid the conclusion that a good many people are trifling with a very serious responsibility. It is quite true that certain conclusions follow from certain premises; and that legitimate thought can get no other conclusion from the premises. But in that sense it is true that Christian conclusions follow from the premises supplied by the universe and life. However there are comparatively few people in the world who are capable of sustained and searching thought based upon a thorough examination of all phases of a given problem, so that they may say:

I cannot help what I think, in the sense that this conclusion follows from these premises.

I am concerned now with people who reject this or that teaching of the Church, or refuse this or that practice, on the ground that they cannot believe it and cannot help what they believe. And I would say quite plainly that in the vast majority of cases that does not represent an intellectual position at all, but prejudice and bad education. The proper duty of a person so situated is, first to examine carefully his opinions and see what are the grounds of them. If that be honestly done, it will commonly be found that they rest on nothing in particular. And then the ground will be clear for an inquiry as to the truth. Let us suppose that the question is this: Is the Church teaching about hell true? There are unfortunately a good many people who say that they do not—usually they say that they cannot—believe in hell. Let that be analyzed so as to bring out clearly why they do not or can not. I venture to say that nothing very convincing will result. It will be found that the opinion does not rest on irresistible premises which justify one in saying one cannot help the conclusion. But then we are thrown back on this, that we are morally responsible for the rejection of an article of the

Christian religion for no adequate reason. That can by no means be a light thing.

Or to take another phase of the subject. One frequently runs across people who justify their rejection of some part of the Christian religion on this ground: I cannot believe what I do not understand, and I cannot understand—perhaps our Lord's presence in the Blessed Sacrament. Now that is a very astonishing proposition when you come to examine it. I take it that any very rigid application of it would pretty effectually empty most of our minds. There is the force of gravitation, *e.g.*, which is said to be expressed in the law that every body attracts every other body in a given ratio. Do you happen to understand that? If so, you have a reputation greater than Newton's awaiting you. There is the very common fact represented by a fire on the hearth. But why certain substances will burn, as we say, and why others will not, *i.e.*, what ultimately constitutes the affinity of elements to one another, I fancy we should find it difficult to say. As a matter of fact, if we follow phenomena with a searching analysis we always end in a mystery, *i.e.*, a fact that we know but cannot explain. The truth is that our proposition about not being able to believe what we cannot understand is founded on a confusion

of thought. A failure, *i.e.*, to distinguish between knowing a fact and knowing the mode of the fact. I believe the fact that fire burns, but the mode of the fact or why fire burns I do not understand at all. In other words, it is a perfectly rational thing to believe a fact for which you have sufficient evidence, although you are quite unable to conceive the mode of the fact or how it comes about. It is quite rational to say, I do not believe our Lord is actually present in the Blessed Sacrament because I cannot understand how He can be. It is entirely rational to say, I believe His presence because I have sufficient testimony to the fact.

I hope I have succeeded in making plain that such acts as I have been dealing with are moral acts, *i.e.*, the willing acts of responsible beings and therefore acts for which God can and will bring us into judgment. The time in which we live needs very grave warning as to its intellectual attitude toward matters of belief. It speaks as though belief were unimportant and conduct everything. The Holy Bible, it is needless to say, lays a good deal of stress upon sins of unbelief—a quite inexplicable phenomenon and sufficient to discredit the Christian religion entirely if there are no sins of unbelief. To say that conduct is everything and belief nothing,

is quite like saying that the fruit of a tree is everything and its root nothing. Conduct is the outcome of belief. We act because we believe. It is quite true that there are persons who "live a good life," as we say, who do not believe the Christian religion, or only parts of it. But the question is, Do they live a good life *because* they disbelieve the Christian religion, or, because they believe certain truths that the Christian religion teaches, while they reject the sanctions of that religion? I think that there will be no difficulty in establishing that the latter is true; that their conduct does rest upon belief of some kind that religion approves and teaches. There is truth in all religions, otherwise they could not exist—a fact that we shall have to develop another time. But negation is entirely fruitless of good. And if a fragmentary faith can produce a good fruit, a complete faith can and ought to produce more. And it is hardly an excuse for failure in our duty toward God, that we try to perform our duty toward our neighbor. We cannot rightly release ourselves from the obligations of some commandments on the ground that we perform others scrupulously. We should not understand that a man was to be acquitted from a charge of theft on the ground that he had never committed

murder. Neither do I understand that one can be held to be excused from the obligations of worship on the ground that he is charitable.

Let us go back to our starting point; our obligation to serve God is to serve Him with our whole being, body, soul, spirit. As we learned long ago in our catechism, "My duty towards God is to believe in Him, to fear Him, and to love Him, with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul, and with all my strength." And we shall do this best, indeed we shall only do it effectually, by the complete surrender of ourselves to God, that His Holy Spirit may dwell in us and work through us. God the Holy Ghost inhabits the humble Christian, not simply directing such activities as we call spiritual, but so guiding the whole man that all his actions become spiritualized, *i.e.*, come under the control of spiritual motives. His senses are purified, his intellect is enlightened, his will directed in such wise that he shows that he is controlled by the mind of the Spirit. And that is the significant fact of his life, that he is not a Christian in certain directions along certain lines of activity, or by certain beliefs, but he is a Christian because he is God-possessed, and whatever he does, whether it be exalted acts of faith and worship, or such

common and seemingly unreligious things as eating and drinking, he does all to the glory of God.

O God Holy Ghost, our Eternal Guide and Friend, grant to us Thy humble servants that by Thy holy inspiration we may think such things as are right and by Thy merciful guiding may perform the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty and Merciful God, that the Holy Ghost may come upon us, and by His gracious indwelling make us a temple of His Glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

III.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN INSPIRATION AND IN THE CHURCH

MEDITATION III.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN INSPIRATION AND IN THE CHURCH

Let us listen to the words of St. Peter—

"HOLY men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Let us picture to ourselves—

The Apostles preaching on the day of Pentecost. The Apostles are standing in some sort of gallery, the crowd below. It is a crowd of all nations under heaven. They are surprised to hear each in his own tongue. They notice a strange exultation in the speakers. Their words and manner are evidently unexpected. They have been drinking, perhaps. St. Peter explains: God is fulfilling prophecy, He is pouring out His Spirit.

Let us consider, first—

The entire change that has come over the Apostles. Since our Lord's death they have been fearful, hesitant. They have seemed paralyzed

by the removal of their leader. They were a group of peasants organized and controlled by a master's will, now left without a head and unable to act. We cannot conceive of their doing anything but scattering back to their homes and their old occupations, with a sense of having taken part in a futile movement. For the moment they are held together by the command to wait. But we feel that no reliance can be placed on them to carry on a movement. And then in a moment all is changed. These men become fervent missionaries. They speak boldly and intelligently. They are no longer peasants but the Apostles of Christ. Why the change? The Holy Ghost has come upon them.

Let us consider again—

This coming of the Holy Ghost is a permanent thing. He has come to abide with us forever. It is not a temporary inspiration of the Apostles that we witness at Pentecost, but a permanent inspiration of the Church. The Church is born with the descent of the Holy Spirit, and henceforth the Holy Spirit will act through it. He is Christ's Vicar carrying on in the Church the work of the Incarnation.

Have we understood this—this abiding of God

the Holy Spirit in the Church and His action through it? Or have we been thinking of the Church and acting toward the Church as though it were a merely human institution?

Let us pray—

To realize the present action of the Holy Spirit. Reverently to regard the action of the Church as guided by the Holy Spirit Himself; to hear His voice speaking through its formularies and ordinances.

O God who dost teach the hearts of Thy faithful people by sending to them the light of Thy Holy Spirit; Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

I have tried in the preceding meditations to indicate something of the relations of God the Holy Ghost to the natural world and to human nature. I dwelt upon that because it is a side of His activity which is apt to be ignored. I want you to think now of another sphere of His activity, that, namely, by which He is the Revealer

and the Preserver of truth. He spake by the prophets, we affirm in the Creed; and that brief sentence covers the Church's belief that God has made Himself known to men, not only through the course and constitution of nature, so that the invisible things of Him are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made, but through the medium of men to whom He had communicated His truth and His purposes. Our religion is not a natural religion based on observation of the order of the world, but a supernatural religion standing or falling with this assumption of a special communication of God to men through inspired persons.

It behooves us therefore to make as clear to us as may be this fact of inspiration; or to express it differently and more generally, What is the nature and method of the action of God the Holy Ghost in fulfilling His office of guiding men into all the truth? We shall have to look at two facts: 1. That inspiration of men which resulted in the production of an authoritative body of Scriptures. 2. That guidance of the Body of Christ whereby the revelation of the mind of God so made is preserved and authoritatively stated.

By inspiration I mean that action of God the Holy Ghost upon the mind of man the result of

which is that the man acted upon is so controlled that what he teaches of the mind of God is true.

I am not trying to produce a definition of inspiration, but to state the fact as best I may. The Church has never given us any definition. Men have from time to time tried their hands at definitions and theories but without any marked success. But we learn from failures as well as from success, and it may help us to look at some of the attempts at a theory of inspiration.

There is a theory that has been widely held which is known as verbal inspiration. This theory holds that to all intents and purposes the Bible was dictated by God; that the various writers were so controlled that they were passive instruments of the Holy Ghost, who is the real author of the Bible. The writers were but penmen.

This theory was, no doubt, inspired by reverence for the Bible, but it breaks down when brought into contact with facts. It is indeed a useless theory as a guarantee of the accuracy of the Bible. If we possessed the original manuscripts of the Bible it might be worth something, but as we do not, but only more or less faulty transcripts of them, it would need to be supplemented by a theory of infallible transmission.

There are plainly inaccuracies in the Bible and any tolerable theory of inspiration must deal with them.

Again, this theory fails to account for the marked individuality of the authors of the several books of the Bible. Each writer of the Bible has his own style, and St. Paul's writings may be distinguished from those of St. John as easily as a page of Macaulay from one of Carlyle. Each has his own mode of thought and characteristic turn of expression. Such things can be accounted for only on the supposition that each presented his material in an unfettered way. To be sure men have contended that the Holy Spirit dictated the style of each man and the peculiarities of his grammar, but it is hardly necessary to refute such a contention.

At the opposite pole of speculation is a very thin theory of inspiration, which indeed denies any special inspiration to the Biblical writers. It recognizes a certain general guidance by God of human thought. It quite properly attributes all that is great and good in human thought to God: but it denies any special and supernatural action of God on the human mind. The inspiration of all great men differs in degree and not in kind.

Buddha and Mahomet, Shakespeare and Carlyle, are inspired in the same sense as Isaiah and St. John. And by inspiration we mean the same thing in all cases, though there may be discerned degrees of intensity.

Now while it is perfectly true that we are right in attributing man's power to discover and state the truth under whatever difference of circumstance or religion to the aid of God the Holy Spirit, it is also necessary to maintain that what we technically call inspiration is an action of God which differs in kind from that gift of God that we call genius. To keep within the Christian sphere, it is quite true to say that St. John and St. Augustine were guided in their work by the Holy Spirit; but the Christian religion also teaches us that there was a special action of the Holy Ghost upon the mind of St. John which was denied to St. Augustine, and by virtue of which the writings of St. John are inspired and those of St. Augustine are not. The distinction means that the Church holds the writings of St. John to be authoritative in their teaching and those of St. Augustine not. It quotes St. John to prove the faith: it quotes St. Augustine to prove the Christian tradition.

What inspiration is as the Church holds it I have tried to state. But it may perhaps be well to distinguish it from other things and to state some of its limitations.

And, in the first place, it is necessary that we should not confound two distinct things: Inspiration and Revelation. All Scripture is inspired; all Scripture is not revealed. A revelation is a communication made by God to man of a truth he could not or does not know otherwise. Such a truth, *e.g.*, as the coming of the Messiah that was proclaimed by the Old Testament prophets, and that the Messiah should be born of a Virgin, are instances of revelation. So also the fact which St. Paul asserts that our Lord communicated to him the doctrine of the Eucharist. In general we say that the Holy Scriptures contain a revelation of the will and purpose of God. But it is plain that, relatively to the extent of Scripture, the amount of the revelation contained is small. And yet all of the Scripture is inspired.

I would like to make one more distinction. We speak commonly of the Scriptures as inspired when it would be more accurate to speak of the writers or editors or collectors as inspired. Inspiration is properly an action of the Holy Ghost upon men, not upon documents. If we remember

that, it makes one or two things clear to us. It makes clear, *e.g.*, that the Holy Ghost may inspire a man to do a certain work the doing of which requires but the use of the natural faculties. A man may be inspired to write a history; but we need not assume that there was any communication to him of the facts of history; he got them as other historians get them. Nor is it necessary to assume that if there were mistakes in his documents or authorities he would be supernaturally informed of them or prompted to correct them. It is never necessary to assume that an inspired man is freed by his inspiration from the limitations of his time and race.

The science of the Bible is the science of the times of its writers; God never saw fit to enlighten them as to the actual truths of science. And similarly the history of the Bible is history known by the usual means of investigation to the men of the time; there is no evidence that God ever communicated to men names and dates. God enlightens men as to His own will and purposes, and in things which do not concern His will and purposes He leaves them to their natural knowledge.

Now God's will and purpose concern our salvation, the things that belong to our religion.

Men are inspired to teach the mind of God in matters that concern this; they are not inspired to teach history and science. With this qualification however: That God's will and purpose are often exhibited by His action in history. In teaching how God's purposes have been manifest in history, therefore, inspired writers will deal with historical material in a special way. They will present the facts of history from special points of view and in special groupings. That, I take it, is the difference between ordinary history and the history written by inspired men in the Bible. We look in the one for an explanation of social and political movements; in the other for teaching as to the purposes of God. We shall seek therefore for the inspiration of the biblical historians in the point of view from which they present historical facts, and in the lessons as to the mind of God that they deduce from those facts. We need to be very clear about this because men always tend to seek an infallibility in names and dates, when they should seek an infallibility in religious teaching. It is of no importance from the biblical point of view whether the date assigned to the beginning of a king's reign be true or not; the important thing is how the facts of the

king's reign are presented—what lessons of faith or wickedness inspiration deduces from them.

And then I want to point out one other thing. The fact that a book is contained in the Bible is not in itself a proof that the writer of it is inspired. Some of the books of the Old Testament are made up of historical material, old chronicles and the like, written by we know not whom. This material has been worked over and edited, probably by prophets, it is most likely by inspired men. But we have to remember that their guarantee does not come from the men who wrote and edited them, but from the fact that the Church has included them in the canon of Scripture. The Church may have selected and included in the canon of Scripture writings whose authors had no inspiration because the Church saw in the books true and useful lessons. This is what has been called the inspiration of selection; that is, the guidance of the Church to preserve for us books of which we have no reason to suppose the authors inspired.

We have not received the Bible piecemeal from the hands of the several authors, but we have received it as it is from the hands of the Church. And the Church does not give it to us to do what we will with, but it gives it to us for certain defi-

nite purposes. We would do well to be clear in our own minds just what these purposes are. It will save us perhaps a good deal of trouble.

The Church's relation to, and use of the Holy Scripture is one thing; our personal relation and use another. The Church uses Holy Scripture as one of its means of proving the truth as to the mind of God for us, *i.e.*, in justifying its teaching in faith and morals. It alone is capable of so using Holy Scripture. It alone may state with authority what the meaning of Scripture is. It is not the function of any man or woman to find out a religion from the Bible. Our religion is taught us by the Church. The Christian religion was committed to the Church to teach, and it had been engaged in teaching it perfectly and in leading men's souls to salvation for some years before any page of the New Testament was written, and for some centuries before it was definitely settled just what was canonical Scripture and what not. It is not a knowledge of the Bible that is necessary to salvation, but a knowledge of the Christian faith; and that faith the Church taught from the first and still teaches to-day. As a matter of fact it is a rare thing that one learns the faith from the Bible; one comes to a knowledge of the Bible after one knows the faith. It is well that this is

so, for one fears that if salvation depended on knowledge of the Bible there are few that would be saved.

But because faith precedes and is independent of personal knowledge of the Holy Scripture, it is not therefore true that we can without loss dispense with the personal study of the Bible. The facts that I have stated do not imply that; they merely point out the direction personal use of the Bible should take.

Our personal use of the Bible should be devotional. It should be directed to the development and the exercise of our spiritual powers. In its pages I see what virtues and spiritual gifts are. I see heroic examples of the spiritual life; the perseverance and the triumphs of the saints. I see, too, examples of stupendous failure, of sin leading to spiritual shipwreck, of the awful waste of spiritual opportunities and powers. I see before all else the life of our blessed Lord. And I see all these things here from the point of view of God; I read them with the running comment of the Holy Ghost. I am reading and studying these things that I myself may be bettered by them. Devotional study is to dogmatic knowledge what practice is to the theory of art. The man who knows art theory and is a subtle and

refined critic, is by no necessity an artist. He views art from without as an admirer; but put a brush in his hand and say, Produce, and he is helpless. So a man may be a deep and subtle theologian and by no necessity a worshipper of God. To know the facts of the Creed is one thing; to live them is quite another thing. We learned the facts of the Creed in our childhood; and the world is full of Christians in knowledge who have no actual Christian experience. The problem of the adult is to make his childhood's training a matter of life; to translate the form of godliness into its power. Devotional study of the Holy Scriptures is one of the most potent means of accomplishing this. We there see spiritual facts put into the terms of a concrete experience: we have before our eyes living object lessons. And these stimulate us to action.

It is time that we turned to another sphere of the Holy Spirit's action, which we have already touched upon lightly—the Church.

Men are apt to take a limited and ineffectual view of the Church. They look upon it, even when they believe pretty thoroughly in it, as an organization; an organization reaching back to Apostolic times indeed, founded by our Lord even, and therefore clothed with a certain authority.

Its words and ways are to be treated with a certain respect and reverence and even obedience. Now that falls far short of the New Testament view of the Church, which is that it is the Body of Christ—the Body quite literally. But there is all the difference imaginable between an organization, which is a machine, and an organism, which is a body. An organization is something put together to achieve certain ends; an organism is a thing born and with a life of its own.

The Church, the Body of Christ, has a life of its own. It is not an institution created by the Apostles, human, though of reverend antiquity and divine command. It is the extension of the Incarnate life of Jesus Christ. Its members are made members of Christ Himself at their baptism; the life of Christ has flowed out into them. They are members of His Body and therefore members of one another.

And this wonderful fact—so wonderful that men have shrunk from realizing it and taken refuge from its mystery in lower and imperfect thoughts—this fact of the inherence of all the baptized in their Risen Head, and their union through Him with one another, is wrought by the operation of God the Holy Ghost. It was the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles

at Pentecost which constituted them one living Body, the depositary of the gifts of the Incarnation. The Holy Ghost becomes the soul of the Body, Christ's Vicar for its rule and guidance. "As in man the secret soul and personality is the center of his being, and holds together the different portions of the body by the life that circulates through them; so, in the Church, the Holy Spirit is the soul of the mystical Body, and flows through the assemblage of beings which compose it, and unites them together."

From this fact certain evident consequences flow. The voice of the Church is the voice of the Holy Ghost. In the past the Holy Ghost spake severally and dividedly through individual men whom He inspired: "He spake by the Prophets." Now a Body has been constituted to be His organ. His will is made known and truth set forth through the teaching office of the Church. The Church is the depositary of revelation and its only authorized teacher. We saw the Church exercising this office in gathering certain writings of its members and setting upon them the seal of its authority, declaring them to be inspired, and so constituting the body of Scripture. If we had reviewed this act of the Church historically we should have seen that this process was a selective

process: that not all the writings that claimed to be Scripture were allowed to be such; but there was a sifting and critical process by which some were retained and others rejected.

And thus that right that we denied to the individual of determining from the study of Holy Scripture what is and what is not true in matter of faith and morals is a right claimed from the beginning by the Church. Holy Scripture is not self-interpretative, and from early time men led by self-will put forth their individual fancies as doctrines of the Church. Then the Church intervened with authority and said: "This is the Catholic Faith, which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved."

We cannot insist too much in these days of self-will and individualism upon this fact of the teaching office of the Church of God speaking under the control of the Holy Spirit. Unless this teaching office exist we have absolutely no certainty in matters of religion, and in place of a fixed faith we have a body of shifting and utterly unreliable opinion. The Pilate-question, "What is truth?" must be upon the lips of all of us: and there is no voice nor any to answer. One says, I think so; and another, I think thus; but no one can say, I know. We see the results of that view

of religion about us to-day. Men say, "I do not know and therefore I cannot practise." They realize that an uncertain religion is a useless religion. Thus saith Luther, and thus saith Calvin, is a poor foundation on which to build the edifice of faith. Thus saith Peter and thus saith Paul, is little better. If we are to build for eternity there is but one foundation—thus saith the Lord; if we cannot attain to that we may be excused from building at all. I profoundly sympathize with the modern man or woman who in sore perplexity amid the jargon of conflicting religions gives up any attempt to attain the truth. And yet that turning away from the problem in despair is not a worthy course. It is one of the trials of our age that we are deafened by strident voices crying, Lo, here! and Lo, there! But the difficulty of a problem is not a reason for declining to attempt its solution. The existence of the counterfeit may render it difficult to find the true; but after all the counterfeit could not exist unless the true did. If a friend were to will you ten thousand dollars you would not say, with a sigh, "I really cannot do anything with all this money. The market is full of bad investments and wild-cat companies and sharpers ready to do the unwary!" If you are ill you do not say,

"What is the use of taking medicine? The quacks are innumerable." In everyday life one assumes that by the exercise of proper diligence truth may be found. And so in religion: truth may be found—and after all with not much difficulty.

The Church has exercised this office of interpreting Holy Scripture and setting forth the true faith through the action of its councils. The councils of the Church are not legislative bodies assembled to proclaim new dogmas of the faith. The faith was once for all delivered to the saints, and there is not nor can be any new faith to proclaim. If an angel from heaven were to proclaim any other gospel he is to be held in anathema. The function of a council in matters of faith is not legislative but witnessing. It does not declare what the faith shall henceforth be, but what it has always been. Councils meet to correct errors and to clear up misunderstanding, not to impose new dogmas.

And here again, as in other instances, men's minds are apt to be confused by the naturalness of the process. We seem to be able to account for all that takes place without any hypothesis of the supernatural. A controversy arises on a matter of faith, and a lot of old gentlemen meet and dis-

cuss it, not in a very good temper, and they lose their self-control and call one another names; and after a while they vote, and the ayes have it. And then they sit down and draw up their decree and head it: "It seems good to the Holy Ghost and to us." And it quite takes our breath away. The Holy Ghost! We do not quite see what the Holy Ghost has to do with the matter. And it is the case of the natural world over again. We do not just see how we can make any room for the action of God in the ordinary genesis of a human being. We are so confused by the naturalness of the process that we forget that God works in and through the natural; that the Holy Spirit has been guiding this assembly to its conclusion without taking away their individuality—their humanity. Just as the inspired man does not lose his peculiarities of thought and expression, but still is guided by the Spirit in his teachings, so the assembly, while exhibiting ordinary human characteristics and frailties, is still the medium of the Spirit's action and can say truthfully, "It seems good to the Holy Ghost and to us."

Of course an assembly of Bishops has no infallibility. The infallibility of their decrees does not at once follow from the fact that they are set forth by a council. As I pointed out, the council

assembles to bear witness. They state what they believe to be the mind of the Church. It remains for the Church as a whole to say whether this testimony is true. If the Church as a whole recognizes its own mind in these decrees—if it accepts them as a true expression of its faith—the faith it has always held; then the decrees become binding, but not otherwise. And this has been the case with the great ecumenical councils of the Church. They were universally accepted as expressing the faith of Christendom.

Of course a particular branch of the Church can claim no such infallible authority for its teaching, just because it is a part and not the whole of the Church. Our Lord gave the gift of infallibility to the whole Church when He promised that He would be with it till the end of the world, and that the gates of hell should not prevail against it, and that the Holy Spirit should guide it into all truth. Therefore whatever of local or peculiar teaching there may be in any part of the Church we receive, not as infallibly true, but with that respect and loyalty which are due to the body to which we belong. But it is always subject to revision by the Body itself or by a more authoritative Body.

All this at first sight no doubt seems

complicated and difficult to get at. It seems much simpler to depend on what people are wont to call "the simple Gospel," or "the plain teaching of Scripture." We need simple and plain teaching for our daily lives. But in fact all the apparent complexity issues in simplicity. It exists indeed that we may have a simple religion. If you remove it, what results is not a simple religion, but an uncertain religion.

If it is of any importance at all that we should believe anything, it is of the same importance that we should have certainty about it. And we can never have that certainty if our sole source of authority be our individual impression of what the Bible teaches. As a matter of fact few persons in practice form their conceptions as to the teachings and obligations of Christianity from individual study of the Scriptures. They receive their convictions in regard to Christianity from their religious teachers. But these teachers, by their own confession, have no authority. They are teaching individual impressions, and their followers are accepting them without any adequate examination. You have the curious state of things of an authority which is not authoritative.

Now a revelation of the will of God must be

binding, and to be binding it must come to us under such conditions that we can easily know what it is—just what we are bound to. And not only that learned persons may know, and persons with leisure may find out, but that even the simplest person may know. Now a revelation made once for all and committed to a book cannot in the nature of things be thus easily ascertainable. It is necessary that the revelation shall have authorized teachers to whom the simple and unlearned may appeal to know their obligations. A book may be as infallible as you please but if it have no infallible interpreter it is quite useless to the unlearned at any rate. And the unlearned need religion as much as the learned.

This apparently complicated matter of the authority of the Church then, is God's method of keeping religion ascertainable and simple; of enabling the simple person to know just what Christianity is; of delivering him from the Babel which has resulted wherever the authority of the Church has been denied. Revelation was delivered to a teaching body with authority to teach it. God founded the Church, not to go on its way making what it could out of revelation, but to be the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, the normal sphere of His action, that through it He might continually

teach the truth. At every turn we are met by the temptation to exclude the action of God from His creation; to attribute to Him merely the creation of things and not their perpetuation and guidance. And at every turn we are bound to resist this temptation and to vindicate for God His place as a present power. God is no less in the Church to-day than He was in the time of the Apostles; He is not farther removed from men than then. We need His guidance no less. Let us thank God that in His providence He has brought us into His Catholic Church, where this is plain, and not left us to doubt and uncertainty and the shifting sands of human thought.

O Almighty God, who hast built Thy Church upon the foundation of Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone, grant that, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, all Christians may be joined together in unity of spirit, and in the bond of peace, that they may be an holy temple acceptable unto Thee. And especially to this congregation now present, give the abundance of Thy grace; that with one heart they may desire the prosperity of Thy Holy Apostolic Church, and with one mind may profess the faith once delivered to the saints. Defend them from

the sins of heresy and schism; let not the foot of pride come nigh to hurt them, nor the hand of the ungodly to cast them down. And grant that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by Thy governance, that Thy Church may joyfully serve Thee in all godly quietness; that so they may walk in the ways of truth and peace, and at last be numbered with Thy saints in glory everlasting, through Thy merits O Blessed Jesus, Thou gracious Bishop and Shepherd of our souls, who art with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one Lord, world without end.

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of Thy Holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the hope of everlasting life, which Thou hast given us in our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

IV.

THE HOLY SPIRIT GUIDING INTO TRUTH

MEDITATION IV.

THE HOLY SPIRIT GUIDING INTO TRUTH

Let us listen to the words of St. Peter—

"IN every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him."

Let us try to picture to ourselves—

A scene described by Herodotus, as illustrating the heathen conception of virtue. Cleobis and Bito are to take their mother to the feast of Juno. But the oxen did not come from the field in time. Therefore, fearing lest they be late for the sacrifice, they drag the car themselves. As a reward the gods take them to themselves.

Consider in the first place—

This ideal of virtue is a very beautiful one. It involves an eagerness of worship; they are willing to undergo much labor to be present at the feast. It involves filial respect and affection. Note that their conduct won wide approbation. Men could appreciate a noble action.

Consider again—

That such conduct is prompted by the natural virtues; the knowledge that all men have of good by nature. God has never left Himself without witness, but in every nation there have been men that feared Him, by whatever varying names they have called Him, and fearing Him they have worked righteousness. Are we quite sure that we are living up to our ideals supplied by the Gospel more completely than they to their lower ones? Fearing God and working righteousness should mean more to us than to the heathen; we have greater privileges and, by consequence, a severer judgment.

Let us pray then—

For grace to fear God and to work righteousness. Let us pray to live consistently by the light of the gospel.

Almighty God, who showest to them in error the light of Thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness: Grant unto all those who are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion, that they may avoid those things that are contrary to their profession and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

O God, who has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the whole earth, and didst send Thy blessed Son to preach peace to them that are far off and to them that are nigh; Grant that all men everywhere may seek after Thee and find Thee. Bring the nations into Thy fold and add the heathen to Thine inheritance. And we pray Thee shortly to accomplish the number of Thine elect and to hasten Thy kingdom, through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord.

In thinking of the work of the Holy Spirit in the world there are two points that we need to make clear to ourselves at the outset. First, that His work is a work among all men; and second, that it has been a gradually developing work.

There has always been a tendency, which I presume is an inheritance from Judaism, to look upon the work of God as being in a way confined to His work among the Jews. Of course God created other nations, but He has not paid the same attention to them since. He selected the Jews and ignored the rest of the world. That was perhaps an inevitable Jewish point of view, but Christians ought to have escaped from it more completely than they have. St. Paul made magnificent protest against it when he asked, Is

He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Here and there Christian writers made the same protest in favor of a positive work of God in the heathen world. But on the whole the protest went unheeded, and it was pretty generally agreed that God's attitude toward the non-Christian world must be one of abhorrence and condemnation.

Now surely, the revelation of God that we have in the character of our blessed Lord reveals Him as God of all the world seeking the highest welfare of all His creatures. And this does not become His character by the Incarnation, but is a revelation of what has always been His character. The Bible indeed fixes our attention upon that special phase of His dealing with His creatures which was to issue in the Incarnation. It was vitally important that that should be understood. But after we have seen God in the revelation of the Incarnation, we ought to be able to take a world-wide view of God's dealings with humanity.

A thoroughly vicious point of view was attained when heathen virtues were spoken of as "splendid vices"—that is an epigram that the world might have been spared. The heathen world we have been told rests under the displeasure of God; but that is true only in the

sense that all wilful sin incurs the divine displeasure. I like to think, rather, of the heathen world as resting under the divine pity. The displeasure of God must rather be upon the Christian world which, thus thinking of heathendom, has left it unconverted all these centuries.

Let us go back to this: That the goodness, and all the virtue, and all the striving after truth and better life that there are anywhere in the world, or have been, are the result of the action of God the Holy Spirit. Wherever men have been moved to seek ideals of truth and purity and noble action, we see Him at work.

Wherever we find men acknowledging any divinity at all, in however crude and imperfect and grotesque shape, there we may see a work of God. And it seems to me more profitable to look at the devout intention underlying worship than the facts of ignorance and superstition that distort it.

Please do not misunderstand me. I do not at all mean that the Holy Spirit inspired heathen systems; but that whatever of aspiration for truth or goodness is anywhere in men's souls, He has inspired. The heathen conception of God is, no doubt, everywhere imperfect. It often involves the attribution to Him of characteristics of lust and cruelty which are the very opposite of the true

character of God. But the point is that God has nowhere left Himself without witness in certain ideals that may be discerned, however dimly, even in the lowest heathenism. Our present point of view is not to dwell upon the corruption and distortion of the idea of God which is visible in heathenism, but upon the fact that there is an idea of God there.

I would insist that this is the work of the Holy Spirit; He it is that has prevented the world from becoming atheist and materialist, and thereby always kept the ground ready for the reception of a pure religion when the time came to proclaim one. There was a very real preparation of the world for Christianity outside Judaism. The work of the heathen philosophers and moralists had at least shown the inadequacy of the current notions of God and theories of life. Heathen thought had become profoundly dissatisfied with heathen attainment and ideals. Such dissatisfaction is the essential preliminary to progress. The perception of the untruth of old systems, and the desire for better ones, made it easy for the truth of the Gospel to find hearers; men were ready for the new.

This is true of heathenism to-day; it is conscious dimly of its impotency; it is everywhere

open to the appeal of a purer religion. On our part, the fact that we recognize that God the Holy Spirit has preserved a certain amount of truth in heathen thought, is not our excuse for inactivity, but our call to service. As God opened the doors of the Græco-Roman world to the Apostles, as He brought the Germanic nations to the door of the Church, so He has to-day opened all heathenism to our approach. To talk about the heathen being saved by their own simple religions, or their religions being suitable to them as Christianity is to us, is intolerable. Let it be that God will judge the heathen by the light that He has given them and that therefore they may be saved without Christianity, surely Christianity means more than escape from hell! It has meant the gradual elevation of the nations that have embraced it in moral and spiritual life. Heathenism has proved itself utterly inadequate to moralize or spiritualize life. It is shame and degradation that Christians to-day show themselves so callous to the needs of the non-Christian world. One sometimes questions the sincerity of our professions of attachment to our Lord, when we have so little love for souls; when we make so little effort to bring to Him those myriads of souls for whom He hungers. The cause of missions would seem to

be the one cause that ought not to be compelled to plead for support. Support of missions ought not to be the matter of pitiful begging that it is. One's soul grows sick at the luxury and self-indulgence of Christians who cannot support missions; at the contemplation of the amount spent on mere amusement, while souls all over the world are crying out for the Gospel of life. What is the relation, do you suppose, between what any city spends on the one item of theatrical amusement, and what it gives to the extension of the kingdom of God? One's heart sickens, not when one thinks of the state of heathenism, but of the state of Christendom. God the Holy Ghost has brought heathen nations to the point of preparation where they are ready to receive the Gospel, and we leave the heathen world to rot in its corruption.

Let us turn to the second point that we were to consider—the gradual unfolding of truth.

God's revelation is the communication of Himself to the world. There is a revelation of God through the natural world, but dim and uncertain, such as men are likely to misunderstand and distort. Heathenism means the distortion of this natural knowledge in minds themselves distorted and unbalanced by sin. Men have really under-

stood this natural revelation of God, so to call it, when it has been interpreted to them by that other revelation that we call supernatural. Now this latter revelation of the will and purposes of God has been gradually unfolded. The Bible is the authorized record of that unfolding. It seems a slow process as we read it, and we are tempted to ask, Why so long?

And the answer is not far to seek. The knowledge of God is imparted as men can receive and use it. The possibility of revelation implies something more than a will of God to reveal; it implies a possibility of reception—a certain receptivity on the part of man. There could be no profit in revealing to man what he is not yet ready to use. We are told of many scientific discoveries that were made by the Chinese, centuries before they were made in the West. They knew gunpowder, they knew the compass: and we are asked to admire the brilliancy of the Chinese. But we do nothing of the sort. The Chinese did practically nothing with their discoveries; they failed to grasp their significance. When the West discovered the same things they were revolutionary; they created a new art of war; they unlocked the secrets of the ocean. It is altogether probable that most of the things that we mark as epoch-

making discoveries have really been discovered a good many times. But the only significant discovery is that which coincides with insight into use, when the discovered fact meets a mind which can appreciate it. So in revealed truth—a truth can be useful only when it can be appreciated. Accordingly at many times and in many manners God spake by the prophets unto the fathers, imparting truth carefully; it was only in the fulness of time that God spake by His Son. It would have been quite useless to unfold deeply spiritual truths to people in the state of development of nomad tribes. A few simple facts about God and duty were all that they could possibly profit by under the circumstances. It would have been of no profit to enunciate an advanced code of ethics, like the Sermon on the Mount, to an unorganized mass of lately freed slaves, such as were the Israelites at the time of the Exodus. It is not necessary to repeat the blunder of the past in attempting to find all the truths of the Gospel in the Book of Genesis. The Old Testament was not primarily addressed to us, but to men living centuries ago under utterly different circumstances; and it therefore presented such truths and in such forms as were useful to the times. The teaching of the prophets was not the proc-

lamation of abstract truths, but was plain, practical teaching addressed to their contemporaries, and including such a revelation of God's will as would be helpful to them.

The wonder of the Bible, and a great evidence of its divine origin, is the way in which truth is gradually unfolded: truths at first stated simply, being gradually developed in all their complex relations; slowly rising from hint and implication and type, to a full expression of their meaning. We are used to this—to the tracing of one consistent religion, with varying fulness of statement, from Genesis to Revelation, and we easily miss the extraordinary significance of it. But you will see what it means if you will take up the history of Greek development, for example, where there are constantly varying and contradictory theories deduced by the philosophers from the facts of the universe. The mutual contradictoriness of the philosophical systems is in ever startling contrast with the orderliness of the unfolding of our religion. Each philosopher tears down the edifice erected by his predecessor to clear the ground for his own building, which arises in an entirely different order of intellectual architecture; while each of the great religious teachers of the Bible carries on the work of his

predecessors with sympathetic understanding of it; never tearing down what has been built, so that the result is a building harmonious in all its parts.

Christianity is only the last stage in this age-long process of building—a stage completely harmonizing with all that went before. Our Lord Himself came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them. The Gospel itself is a complete revelation only in the sense that it is a final proclamation of the mind and purposes of God. It is final in the sense that it contains implicitly all truth necessary to salvation; not final in the sense that it is self-interpretative, and that nothing further need be done to make its truths intelligible to succeeding generations. The Church through its great teachers at once took up the work of so stating the truths of the Christian revelation that they might be intelligible to their generation. We see how this is clearly enough, if we keep ourselves within the covers of the New Testament. Our knowledge of the Gospel is aided and made intelligent by the writings of St. John and St. Paul. But it is the same thing outside the New Testament. Our knowledge of the meaning of the New Testament is aided and made intelligent by the writings of St. Athanasius

and St. Augustine. Above all, the Gospel is given definite and authoritative interpretation by the great councils of the Church. That is that work of the Holy Spirit which our Lord announced; that when He came He would guide the Church into all truth. We are surprised at this process of the gradual unfolding and authoritative statement of the truth only if we have lost sight of the fact of the continuous work of the Holy Spirit in the Church. When men have neglected to think of the Holy Spirit as still at work: or when they have thought of His work as being confined to His action upon the individual soul; they have found it difficult to conceive of any progressive statement of the truth, or progressive understanding of it. But if we once catch the New Testament point of view, that the Holy Ghost is the Vicar of Christ, a living person always abiding in the Church, the Body of Christ and guiding it to its work, this progressive unfolding of the meaning of the Gospel becomes natural, nay, inevitable. It is easy to understand that the needs of one age are not those of its predecessors altogether. In the Old Testament what men most of all needed was the certainty of the uniqueness of God and of His moral character, which is a commonplace to us; but it is a commonplace to us just because

of the triumph of that truth in the overflow of polytheism. Any truth that conquers thereby renders itself commonplace. By the men of the third Christian century what was needed was the vindication of the complete deity of Christ—that He was not some sort of a super-eminent creature acting as the agent of God. That vindication was effected by the great theologians and councils of the time. It was effected so completely indeed that the succeeding age found itself in need of vindicating our Lord's complete humanity; of proving that He was not God masquerading under an unreal semblance of humanity, but was in all points like as we are, save without sin. That, too, was done and in like manner each age has had its own problems of doubt and difficulty and uncertainty to meet; and it has met them in essentially the same way, by the unfolding into greater explicitness of the teaching of revelation; by being guided by the Holy Spirit to more perfect understanding of the truth of God.

What has been said contains the answer to the modern demand which expresses itself in denunciation of dogma, and the clamor for what it calls the "simple Gospel." No doubt it is a reaction from the manifold and warring sects of post-

reformation times. The spectacle of Western Christendom split up into a miscellaneous multitude of sects, each claiming to be in possession of the "pure gospel," was bound to produce some such result. What has happened is that people demand to see their way; and they think that this will best be done if all theory be thrown aside and we turn our attention to what they call the practical aspects of life. It is assumed that while men differ in theories about God and Christ, and the Church, they will be able to agree perfectly in theories about conduct. But such an assumption is amusingly childish. It is plain enough to any one who has at all followed modern speculations in ethics that men are no more likely to think alike in morals than in theology. If we abolish differences in dogma by the simple method of dropping all discussion, we shall have sectarianism in ethics as the result of transferring our attention to that field. What is wanted is not a simple theology or a simple ethics, but a simple principle of authority. If religion, whether as dogma or as conduct, has no authority, there is no need of talking about the matter at all. We are left to our personal devices to do as we may or will. Simplicity can never be attained by dropping

dogma and going back to the plain words of the Gospel. Of all futile theories that is the most futile.

For us there is no need of doubt or hesitation as to the obligations of faith or practice. Such only arise when we choose to turn our backs upon the continuous teaching of the Holy Spirit through the Body of Christ, and muddle our brains with the mutually contradictory systems of heresy. If we do not know what is true, it is because we have not chosen to listen to the only voice which can make any pretentions to tell us the truth in unmistakable tones.

And from another point of view this demand for a simple, undogmatic Gospel is impossibly absurd. It is a demand for intellectual stagnation; a revolt against what in any other department of human achievement is considered the peculiar glory of modern times—progress. We can only have a simple and undogmatic religion at the expense of not thinking about it at all. Nobody demands an undogmatic biology or an undogmatic chemistry. Nobody complains that dogmas in these departments of knowledge "fetter thought." It is recognized that progress in biology means the definite ascertainment of facts; that is, the establishment of scientific dogma. We should regard

it as a good thing if we could so ascertain our facts that henceforth there should be no manner of doubt about them possible. The effort of science is to establish facts with as much certainty as possible. So far from fettering thought, the establishment of a fact sets thought free to expend its energies in the establishment of other facts and thus make progress. Sciences are slowly built up by settling certain things, and then, on the basis of the known to go on to the investigation of the unknown. It is not otherwise in theology. A dogma is a settled fact of religion. Only, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Christian Church has been enabled to settle facts, not provisionally, and as working hypotheses, but finally and completely. Having settled certain facts, theology, like any other science, goes on to deal with other facts, thus gradually broadening the area of truth. This is as good a thing in theology as it is in biology. People who talk about dogma as hindering the investigation of truth are those who do not believe in the office of the Holy Ghost to lead the Church into truth, and are eager, not for truth, but for opinion—their own opinion. They would reduce all religion to a matter of individual opinion, which means that they would deprive it of all authority. In that case my opinion and your

opinion would be of equal value; that is, neither of them would in the least matter.

This is not a matter of minor interest; of merely speculative importance, or of anti-protestant polemics. It is a matter of the survival of religion—whether we are to keep Christianity, or lapse into an ethical paganism. If the theories of extreme individualists are true (and they are certainly the perfectly logical outcome of the premises), then what Christianity amounts to is this: There lived nineteen centuries ago a man—Jesus Christ—of whose life and sayings we get uncertain glimpses through the writings of His followers. We cannot be very sure of anything that He did or said, for what we have is not an accurate account of them, but an account modified and distorted by the preconceived notions and personal point of view of the New Testament writers. We have not an unblurred picture of Christ Himself, but we see Him through the distorting personality of Matthew or Mark or John. We see Him not as He was; but we see what others in after years thought about Him. It is probable, however, that we have here and there in the Gospels, detached sayings of His; that especially in the Sermon on the Mount we get a fair report of His teaching. This convinces us that He was the

greatest man that ever lived; greatest in that He had the noblest and purest conception of the mind of God, This interpretation of the mind of God that we get from Him, as being the most perfect that we anywhere have, we would do well to follow. That I think is a perfectly fair summary of the views of so-called liberal Christianity; that I think is the only tenable view, if you throw over historic Christianity.

And what it means is undoubtedly this: that there is no such thing as certainty in matters of belief. Belief is a purely personal matter—a matter that concerns oneself alone and one's personal honesty. It means in fact that we are all agnostics. It differs no whit from agnosticism. An agnostic, I take it, can hold any sort of opinion; what is characteristic of him is that he has no certainty, and does not believe that certainty is attainable. And I do not believe that there is any intellectual standing ground between historic and dogmatic Christianity and Agnosticism. Men may amuse themselves by thinking that they can hold on to a Christianity which has no principle of authority, and they may succeed for a while; but in the long run they cannot and have not.

And there is another phase of the matter. The

assertion of the right to hold any opinion we choose, does not mean that we have the right to any opinion that we may choose to take up, but that we have the right to our own personal conclusions arrived at as the result of definite and careful thought. I have a right to hold these; indeed, I cannot rationally hold anything else. But individualists, who are fond of asserting the rights of reason—which are undoubted—are bound more than most people to be careful in the intellectual processes. But is that conspicuously true of people who reject dogma? Is not what usually happens, that they reject authority and accept authorities? They refuse the authority of the Church, and accept, let us say, the authority of Huxley or Harnack. They reject an at least possibly divine authority, for a frankly human one. It is plainly impossible for the average human being to have first hand belief on many subjects. The vast majority of his beliefs he inevitably gets second hand. He believes because somebody tells him so, whether that somebody be the Church of God or a renowned scholar or the editor of his newspaper. Our beliefs are derived from authority; the only question is—what authority?

It seems to me worth while to consider this

then: that granting for a moment, if you like, that the Church has no authority to interpret Christianity for us; still the Church is a very old and a very wise body. It has managed to exist for nineteen centuries, during all of which it has gone on teaching the same religion. It has seen the rise and fall of innumerable systems which have proclaimed some variant of this religion as the true thing. It has had in its service the best intellectual life of the centuries. Its religion has approved itself to all varieties of culture and race and social condition. If the Church has no other authority, it has the authority of prescription. And that is an authority, not infallible to be sure, but not to be lightly set aside for the opinion of this or that person however reputable for gravity of scholarship; it is not to be set aside for anything but an immense personal conviction founded upon long and careful study of all the facts involved.

And surely our attitude as faithful children of the Church will not be an attitude of hesitation and doubt; still less an attitude of criticism; but a sympathetic attempt to understand and follow the mind of the Holy Spirit, as that mind is made known in the Church of the Living God. We shall find our best intellectual exercise in follow-

ing appreciatively the course of revelation; in studying how God has unfolded His mind and purposes to men as they were able to understand and use them. It is a wonderful story, this story of God's dealing with men; but it would be much more wonderful if there were no such story to record. Belief in God at all, means belief in one who watches over and cares for His children, never, even in their most wilful moments, leaving them without the aid of His Holy Spirit; never leaving them utterly in the darkness to falter and stumble hopelessly on their way. Always to men everywhere there has been light if only they would look up; if only they would try to follow what they knew of best; if they would try to realize in their lives at least some elemental truths that no one is without: that there is power outside them to which they owe allegiance; a justice that is of obligation between man and man. "God, that hath made the world, and all things therein—hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the whole earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He be not far from any one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being."

Out of that dim state He led our fathers. To us He has given the fulness of His revelation—we have the mind of Christ and the guidance of His Spirit. Shall we abandon that for a cultured paganism, enticed by the glittering bait of free thought—the bait once thrown so successfully in Paradise—"Ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil"?

O Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life; Grant us perfectly to know Thy Son Jesus Christ, to be the way, the truth, and the life, that following the steps of Thy Holy Apostles, we may steadfastly walk in the way that leadeth to eternal life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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V.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CONSCIENCE

MEDITATION V.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CONSCIENCE

Let us listen to the words of St. Peter—

"DEPART from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

Let us try to picture—

Our Lord in St. Peter's boat. Our Lord has bidden the fishermen let down their nets. St. Peter protests: "We have toiled all the night and have taken nothing." Still he obeys: "Nevertheless, at Thy word." The great draught of fishes follows. Then, St. Peter, overwhelmed with wonder, falls down at Jesus' knees. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

Let us consider, first—

That St. Peter is only dimly conscious of who our Lord is. But he does feel that he is in the presence of a divine power. His first thought is of his own unworthiness; he cannot bear the contrast between his own life and the purity which he feels must belong to Christ. His impulse is to

put a distance between himself and God. The thought of his sinfulness had not, perhaps, troubled him much till it is brought thus face to face with purity. It seems very awful that loaded with sin he should be in the presence of the Divine.

And consider again—

St. Peter had been a sinner all his life. We have been sinners all our lives. Have we simply acquiesced in the fact? Have we had merely conventional notions about sin? If so, we need to get more into the presence of God; to see ourselves through His eyes. We are used to our own sins, as we are used to our own faces; our realization of them lacks vividness. We need a fresher point of view. People shrink from confession, for one reason, because the deliberate statement of their sins brings to them, with something of a shock, a perception of the way they will look to someone else. Consider how foolish St. Peter's thought was: it was just because he was a sinful man that he needed our Lord. Our sins should drive us into the arms of God.

So let us pray—

For understanding of our own sinfulness. Pray that the Holy Ghost may illumine your con-

science that you may judge self rightly. Pray, God be merciful to me a sinner.

Almighty and Everlasting God, who hateth nothing that Thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all those who are penitent: Create and make in us contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of Thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

God be merciful to me, a sinner.

I have been dealing in the preceding meditations with some of the broad and general aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit. That treatment was preliminary to the consideration of the more personal aspects of His work—His work in us as individual Christians in the fulfilment of His office as Sanctifier. His work in us begins, from this point of view, with that preliminary action upon the soul, by which the soul is led to desire God, even though it does not perceive Him as God—that action of which our Lord speaks when He says that none come to Him except they be drawn by the Father. There are many drawings of God in our lives of which we do not perceive the source. I suppose all of us are conscious

from time to time of the inadequacy of our lives; of their failure to attain completely the ends for which we profess to be striving. We experience that vague yearning which we describe as a desire to be better. We become restless under the sense of our lack of conformity to our ideals, and our lack of effort to attain them. There are times when visions float before us which do not define themselves, but are tantalizing and disturbing: visions of a possible use of powers which should be more fruitful in the way of righteousness. These, it may be, stir us to activity of a sort. We take up this practice, we struggle with that habit; for the moment we concentrate upon a definite aim; and then the vision fades, the energy seems exhausted, and we fall back with a sigh of relief into our accustomed manner of life. It was an access of nerves, an emotional stress, we tell ourselves; we thought heaven opened and we saw visions of God; but now we are awake and our pillow is a stone.

And yet it was not a dream at all but the deepest reality; it was the Holy Ghost attempting to arouse us. If there is any one thing we need beware of, it is the disregarding of just such fleeting spiritual impressions, such passing glimpses of things possible to us beyond our attainment. God

still speaks to men in spiritual vision. God still calls us to go on in the way of righteousness; and alas for the soul that merely stirs in its slumber and mutters, "It was a dream."

This guiding and stimulating action of the Holy Spirit expresses itself largely through the conscience. There are so many erroneous notions abroad concerning the conscience that we must be certain that we are not under the influence of any of them. There seems to be very widespread impression that the conscience is some sort of an infallible voice which speaks from heaven in the soul of man, by listening to which one may certainly know the right and the wrong. In fact there is no such voice. What people mean who are fond of saying that their conscience will not permit them to do this, or directs them to do that, is that they do, or do not, want to act in a certain way. There is nothing more fearfully common than the substitution of our desires for our conscience.

The conscience is the illuminated judgment. There is, no doubt, given us a fundamental distinction between right and wrong. We are impelled to do the right and avoid the wrong. But before we can do either the one or the other, we must know what is right and what is wrong; and this we can know only as the result of education.

Careful moral training is, therefore, to the last degree, important, for upon it depends the rightness of our conduct.

Two opposite temptations constantly beset us. One, the implicit assumption that God will do everything in the matter of religion: that it is really a species of impertinence for us to attempt to aid our spiritual development. The other, is a self-confidence which altogether ignores God. It is curious to note the number of people who identify the spiritual with the impractical. To say a thing is spiritual seems to remove it from the region of human effort, or even of common sense. The spiritual is the unforeseeable and the unaccountable—the wayward action of God. Consequently they never get to close quarters with a spiritual problem such as the training of the conscience. On the other hand, there is a temper that assumes that its knowledge is sufficient, and resents the implication that it is in danger of failing in the matter of moral judgment.

Now there is nothing more certain than that the untrained conscience will go wrong. The coarser and broader distinctions of right and wrong are indeed plain enough; but it is not only with the coarser distinction that we have to deal, but the subtle shadings of conduct, when the dis-

tinction is not between plain good and bad, but between good and better, between the allowable and the advisable, between the permitted in law and the permitted in charity. The whole question of the use of our liberty, in particular, is a delicate one. Questions that involve coöperation in another's sin are often hard to decide. How far may I associate with unbelievers and lax Christians? How far, in general society, am I obliged to assert my Christian principles? Under what circumstances am I obliged to censure another's conduct? One has only to put a few questions such as these to see that they are not to be answered offhand. Social life is a very complex matter, and the solution of its problems requires much more thought than it usually gets. A rough and ready reference to current standards is not apt to give a Christian solution.

It is, I think we may say without hesitation, not through any direct inspiration or enlightenment that the Holy Spirit may be expected to guide our consciences, but through the help He affords us when we set ourselves to study the Christian law of life. He will guide in the matter of conscience as He guides in the matter of belief—that is, He will guide the mind which seeks guidance by the use of its opportunities. Neglect

of opportunity will usually mean for us an erroneous conscience; that is, a conscience whose conclusions are wrong, mostly because founded in ignorance. It is extremely easy to have an erroneous conscience. It is especially easy for women; for women are quick of insight and acute in the perception of the superficial aspects of a case; but they are deficient in restrained and balanced judgment and in power of analysis. Consequently they are apt to conclude or act precipitately on insufficient knowledge. They are, too, quick of sympathy, and are apt to act upon their sympathies, rather than on their judgment. In other words their good qualities need the balance of a restraining power. If that power is not found in an educated conscience, they will act erroneously. It is quite easy to miss the fact that lively sympathies and good intentions are not the equivalent of clearly understood principles.

And there is this further danger, to which allusion has already been made, that the person without careful moral training will mistake the will for the conscience. What seems to be an interior voice bidding me act or not act, is often times but the echo of my own strong desire. That I want or do not want to do a thing very much should always make me suspicious of my

determination; should make me very careful to find out just what are the motives of my act. This is particularly attended to when the individual will comes into contact with constituted authority. I am not obliged to obey against my conscience, it is said, and my conscience will not let me do this. It is perfectly true that we are not obliged to obey against conscience; but in a special case of opposition to a ruling authority the point to be decided is the source of the repugnance we feel. The question is not at all whether we want to obey, but whether by obeying we shall commit sin. There is no question that the duly constituted authority is the representative of God. But being a human representative it is not infallible. There is a possibility of mistake therefore; but there is a greater possibility of mistake on the part of the individual judgment than on that of the authority, and unless we are very sure that we are asked to commit sin, the safe and right course is to obey. There is ordinarily no danger in obeying. The authority which issues a command is responsible toward God for any error there may be, and not the person that obeys. There is always danger in disobedience. One always counsels a child, for example, to obey a parent, even in so serious a

matter as not being confirmed, or not going to confession. One is perfectly certain that the parent is utterly wrong; but the parent being legitimate authority in the matter has all the responsibility and the child is guiltless. The child is responsible to the parent and has no independent responsibility. The parent, on the other hand, is directly responsible to God.

The allowing of the will to get in the way of the conscience, and the failure to distinguish the two, leads directly to the spiritual disaster of a stifled conscience: the voice of God the Holy Spirit is stifled and overborne by the clamor of self-will and the shouting of the passions. There are many whose conscience was once acutely active who are now untroubled by its importunities—it is dead. And there is a curious feature about this deadening of the conscience which is usually missed: it is as though conscience had many voices, and we were able to silence them one by one. The habitual indulgence in a special sin has the effect of silencing the conscience in regard to that sin, while it remains acute in regard to others. We see men of high-toned and scrupulous honor in ordinary business transactions, who in political affairs are completely unscrupulous. We see people of apparently sincere

religious principle, who are quite devoid of principle in the one matter of giving. One knows people whose conscience would abhor the suggestion of theft, who are unscrupulous gossips. There are people who habitually use the sacraments whose sense of truth is, at least, defective. We are tempted to say, hypocrites! But not at all. We are all of us more or less imperfectly developed morally. We have neglected this or that side of conduct; or we have maimed our moral nature by indulgence in pet sins; or we have studiously disregarded some phase of Christian activity. What we need is to turn the light of God's revelation into the dark corners of our lives where habitually we do not look. We must listen more intently to such feeble protests of conscience as still survive.

The starting point to a more satisfactory life in this regard must be the conviction of the awfulness of sin in the sight of God. If we can get ourselves face to face with the tremendous fact of sin and the part it has played in the history of the human race; if we go on to entertain the probability that we are much more concerned personally in the matter than we have supposed; go on to put aside our habitual presumptions in our own favor, and to consider that we are probably

sinners in ways, and to a degree, that we have not yet realized; then we shall give place to the action of the Holy Spirit in convincing us of sin—of our own personal sinfulness. But not even the Holy Spirit can do very much in the face of a self-satisfied life. If we refuse to admit our own symptoms, the physician can do little for us. So long as one denies sinfulness, or admits merely general sinfulness, and declines to consider the details, the case is hopeless.

In the first place we must estimate our own conduct; which means, we must try to see it from God's point of view. The only opinion about sin which is worth much is God's opinion. God's estimate of conduct is what we are going to be judged by—what we are already being judged by. Satan's estimate of sin is easily got at. It is expressed in the theories about sin that are bruited about the world to-day, and are equivalent to saying that it does not amount to very much. In the light of much modern speculation the New Testament seems a very foolish book. It spends a good deal of breath upon things which we are told are of infinitely little importance. If we are all to be saved any way, it is not quite obvious why Christ died. If sin is only a misfortune, or an imperfect stage of development, surely there is a quite un-

necessary fuss made about it. I think that we may as well recognize at the outset that we have to choose between certain modern notions about sin, and the Bible notions of it. It will be easier thinking for us when we have definitely taken one side or the other. In any case do not try to compromise, with this conclusion—that sin is a little sinful.

Let the fact that Christ died for your sin sink into your mind as a quite personal thing. We are used to hearing facts stated about "the race," and "human nature," and "all men," without receiving much impression. We do not seem very intimately connected with such abstractions. It is best to translate expressions from the abstract into the concrete. I have a personal relation to God. My sin is a personal offence against God. The fact that Christ died for sin is personal to me. It was my sin that drove those nails into His cross. Pray to the Holy Spirit to make you understand that. That will help you, for one thing, to look squarely at your own conduct, and not to look at it with one eye, the other meanwhile on that of your neighbor. If we feared the judgment of God half as much as we fear the criticism of our neighbors we should repent better. What makes an act a sin, is not that it offends the maxims of

the social circle in which you move, but that it violates the holy will of God. It may seem quite unnecessary to make such a statement as that—an insult to ordinary intelligence; but it is not so. It were quite easy to give instances where the laws of God are reversed or ignored, and the only plea is, "Everybody does so." It is quite alarming how much of our morality is merely customary, and how little Christian conviction. It is well sometimes to be thrown upon oneself and compelled to scrutinize one's conduct; to find out how much of it is other people's conduct and how much of it is one's own; how much of our conduct, that is, is deliberate, with a sense of its moral value, and how much is blind and thoughtless acquiescence in "what everybody does."

Society, quite naturally, lays stress upon what injures it, and not upon what injures God. It is concerned about crimes. But the Holy Spirit comes to convict the world, not of crimes, but of sin. His dealing with our souls has for its end the production of a profound repentance.

A true repentance cannot spring from regret for the results of sin; it must come from the conviction of having by sin wounded the love of God. In its origin and in all its stages it must be the work of the Holy Spirit dealing with our soul.

To gain a true repentance, therefore, it is of more importance to look to God than to self. Contemplation of self may stimulate regret and remorse; it cannot go far on the production of repentance. Regret and remorse are stupefying; repentance is stimulating. Now it is the work of the Holy Spirit to stimulate the spiritual nature, and bring about that repentance "whereby we forsake sin." This stimulus comes to us, I suppose, in two chief ways. In the first place there is the revolt of the conscience against the will of the flesh which would overcome its resistance. Sin presents itself in some alluring form; it arouses desire; we feel the outrush of the appetite towards the suggested gratification. It seems, most likely, but a small thing. We say to ourselves that the restraint of the craving appetite is an unnecessary and prudish strictness. Many very respectable people gamble moderately—not to say gambling, of course; it is merely a little stimulus to the game, and what is the harm where one can afford it? This matter of extreme strictness in being present at mass every Sunday is an unnecessary burden. Of course we intend to worship regularly, but there are times when we need to relax a little. It is rather a nuisance to have to watch over one's tongue so perpetually; what

harm in a little personal gossip, even if it be flavored with a spice of malice at times? And so it goes through a whole round of poisonous sins. And what is going to hold us to the mark? Simply the sustained protest of the Holy Spirit speaking through the conscience; simply that voice of the enlightened judgment that protests: you are not right and you know that you are not right.

And still we know that that protest is not always corrective. If we examine ourselves carefully, we find that there are selected cases in which we have not heeded it. We have, possibly, attended pretty well; but there are special sins in regard to which we have simply refused to listen to the voice of God; pet indulgences which we simply will not give up—we decline even to consider whether we need to repent of them. The sick man, ordered upon a diet, clings to this or that little luxury to the last. There remain, after years of fairly good living, one or two little plague spots in our lives.

It is just there, then, that we need to deal with ourselves with complete honesty; to understand that those little forms of self-indulgence, those tolerated sins, are the breeding places of infection whence disease may at any time spread over the whole life. The root of bitterness remains un-

destroyed there. We clean out our garden pretty well, but in the end we tire just before the work is completed and leave one little seed-plot of weeds which will undo all that we have accomplished.

It is a curious thing, in the spiritual experience, this sagging of the will; this spiritual relaxation before the work is complete. There is the sense of having won the victory, while the enemy is still in the field. How many battles have been lost just by failure to follow up an initial success; by regarding the retirement of the enemy as complete defeat. There is no discharge in this war. There is need of a perpetual tensity of the will, which answers to the perpetual voice of the conscience. We may rely upon it that there will be no ceasing of the warnings of the Holy Spirit. He gives no rest till we have silenced Him forever by expelling Him from our souls.

The other way in which the Holy Spirit acts in life, is the constant presentment to us of what we might be. We all of us dream dreams, and see visions. We are apt to say to ourselves that they are matters of the imagination. But the imagination, too, is an instrument of God. They come to us in moments of quiet, it may be, when the work is over and the house is stilled. They come in moments of weariness, when life seems to

press very heavily. They come in moments of discouragement, when we seem to have failed utterly in the thing we have undertaken. Through the deeps of our soul, overwhelmed with the thoughts of what we are, there comes the vision of what we might have been. Some memory of youth, when we felt strong and brave to face all that life might hold, when we felt certain that we were going to conquer in the battle that was before us; some resolve after a confession of a communion or a retreat, when the grace of God possessed us, and we felt ready to yield our lives whole-heartedly and undividedly to Him, possesses us. Ah! those visions of a consecrated life! They sweep back to us across the crowded years which have been anything but consecrated. Those bright hopes and aspirations, how far we are from any realization of them to-day. That is what we intended, fully and honestly intended, to make of life; and we have actually made this poor thing we now have, with its spots and stains and scars; its abandoned ideals and its vanished dreams; its cold dead materialism; and we are tempted to answer the returning vision—too late!

But the vision returns not as a mockery to reproach us with what we might have been, but as

an invitation to what we still may be. It is still a vision of God, still a call to a nobler life, still a suggestion of a possible life, filled with noble purpose and spiritual success. No! it is not too late. Many a sad and discouraged life, many a weak and halting life, has the Holy Spirit empowered. Many a dull life, without ambition and aspiration, over which we mutter, Can these bones live? has been breathed upon by God till it was quickened and stood upon its feet and went forth to consecrated service. Only despise not the vision. Our failure is more often there than elsewhere, perhaps, that we turn ourselves away, and say, These things are not for me. Oh, yes! It is for you, that calling of God that you shall arise from the dust of life's contest and follow Him.

What more than anything prevents our contrition, is our dullness to such monitions of God; our failure to attend carefully to such hints of His will. God deals, for the most part, calmly and silently with souls. Occasionally an earthquake will rend the walls of our house, and in its downfall we learn the insufficiency of our building. Now and again storms and tempests teach us the insecurity of the foundations of life upon which we were resting. But to most lives God speaks

neither in earthquake nor in storm, but He speaks in the still small voice. The trifling circumstance, the minute event, the suggested opportunity, these are the means of God's ordinary Providence. The almost suspicion that this that we are doing is not quite God's will. The flash of thought, gone almost as soon as presented, that we are really falling short of opportunity; the momentary unveiling of the heavens, when the light streams out and we see our life for an instant as but a poor and sordid thing; these are the normal modes of God's action-suggestions that we need to repent.

And these awaken, for the moment, desire—the desire of better things for ourselves, which contains the germ, at any rate, of the desire of God. We find it difficult to desire God—just simply God. But the desire of any truth or goodness or purity is essentially a desire for God. To mourn over our incompetence, over our lack of spiritual attainment, if it be not merely a conventional platitude, is a starting point from which we may travel far. For the perception of an unsatisfactory self must send us, in the first place, to the seeking of forgiveness. We understand that change for the better is, at the outset, change in our relation to our Father in heaven. We

cannot get right with our fellow men, we cannot get right with ourselves, until we are right with God. It is not a change toward others that we first want, but a change toward Him. It is only that conviction which will save us from superficial dealing with ourselves. A change of life is needed, but it must be the outward and visible sign of a spiritual change.

We shall have to deal with that more fully by-and-by. For the present let us confine ourselves to this: That the first work of the Holy Spirit with us, is the matter of repentance. He must convince us of sin before He can convince us of righteousness. And if we will let Him do His work adequately and completely, we must let Him convince us of, not the sinfulness of sin in general, but of the sinfulness of our own special state; the sinfulness that is implied in our not being better than we are; the sinfulness of just that sloth and neglect and lack of devotion and self-absorption and self-pleasing and tolerance of low ideals and acquiescence in the common conceptions of a religious life, which, though not great and notable sins, are poisioning the springs of spiritual action, and clouding the spiritual vision of the average person in the average parish in Christendom today.

We are all sinners: and we are all sinners in just these particulars that I have enumerated, and which may be traced to our putting aside of the appeal to spiritual motive in the guidance of our lives. We do not really care to live in the rarefied air of the mountain tops; we would rather live in the miasmic marshes of a semi-worldliness. But if we once open our lives to the influence of the Holy Spirit, if we give Him free action in our souls, we shall speedily understand, nay, we shall eagerly welcome, His teaching, that it is worth any amount of trouble and effort to cleanse and healthen our lives by His grace. We shall welcome the spiritual drainage of repentance whatever its trouble and whatever its shame. "God is pleased to vouchsafe the best that He can give only to the best that we can do."

Only beware of this common feeling—I have nothing to repent of. You have to repent of this: that with all the opportunities God has given throughout your life, and with all the grace of God at your disposal, with all the calls of God echoing about you, you have made no better use of them than you have. You have to repent that you are what you are, and not what God intended you to be. You have to repent that your spiritual life shows so little accomplishment and so little

effort. Repentance means getting all that behind one. It does not mean dealing in dilettante fashion with one or two sinful tendencies, but the break with all that is opposed to God. Then will God the Holy Spirit come into your life with His stimulating and regenerating power; then will He cleanse and invigorate you. Then will you feel the power of your consecration nerving you for spiritual victory. Then will the world seem to you, not your prize to be snatched at, nor your plaything to be amused with, but God's world, to be used by you as the instrument of His service and your salvation. One comes from a thorough repentance with a newness of life that throbs with the delicious sense of deliverance through one's whole being—with a sense that God is all in all to one, and that one is altogether God's.

VI.

CONVERSION

MEDITATION VI.

CONVERSION

Let us listen to the words of St. Paul—

"WHEREUPON, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

Let us try to picture—

The scene outside the Damascus gate. Saul the persecutor is coming along the way leading to the city. He is coming to persecute the Christians. He is eager for the work, and he already pictures his success in putting down this detested sect. He will not shrink from shedding blood, if necessary. Has he not watched the death of Stephen? Then, suddenly there shines around him the light from heaven, and he hears a voice out of the light. Then darkness falls upon him. The reproachful voice says: "Saul, Saul!" Imagine that you hear that voice: "I am Jesus." Then think of the agony of conscience that was Saul's. How the words overwhelm him: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

Consider in the first place—

Saul was not a sinner in the ordinary sense of the word. He was not placing himself in wilful opposition to God. "I thought I was doing God service": he will say that, pathetically, years after. The trouble was that his conscience was erroneous. He had persecuted Christianity instead of examining it. He was not a sinner in that he was defying God; still his conduct was very wrong. He needed conversion.

Consider again—

What Saul needed was enlightenment; a different conception of God's will. He needed a light from heaven; and that light from heaven when it came overcame the earthly light. In that light his view of Christianity and of his own conduct was completely reversed. Conversion means a turning from the world to God. We shall find it possible to do that when the light of this world is dimmed for us by the light from heaven; when we see visions. What converts us is not the vision of self, but of God. Saul saw not himself, but Jesus.

Let us pray, then—

That the Holy Spirit may illuminate our minds.

That He may begin and continue in us the work of conversion.

O Almighty God, who showest to them that are in error the light of Thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness; Grant unto all those who are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion, that they may avoid those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Conversion is a turning: a turning away from sin and a turning to God; a turning from the imperfect, even where the imperfect does not seem sinful, to the more perfect, because the more perfect is the more godlike. Conversion is never a single event. Saul was not a Christian in any sense, still less a perfect Christian, when he arose from the ground, and was led into Damascus blinded, with all his conceptions of life shattered and overthrown. Conversion may begin in some cataclysmic experience, when the house of life comes down about our ears. Some event, some word of another, some breathing of God the Holy Ghost, may open one's eyes to the fact of one's sin, may bring to one a rush of conviction that the ideals one has been following after are

not the ideals of the Gospel: some unexpected occurrence may shock one rudely out of the self-complacency which we have mistaken for the peace of God—but all that does not constitute a conversion. Conversion is a process, not an event. Not, have you been converted, but are you being converted, is the proper form of the question. A change of conviction is much; a change of habits of life is more. The gradual uplifting of thought, of word, of action, from the lower to the higher, from the material to the spiritual—that is what true conversion means. The complete substitution of the motives of the Gospel for the motives of the world—that is the end. Are you being converted? Does your life, that is, show ever more complete abandonment of the merely material, ever more complete conformity to the life of your blessed Master? As life moves on through the tangled paths of weariness and joy; as the shadows of the evening troop down the western mountains, and enfold one by one the joys, the ambitions, the friendships, the loves of life; as more and more we turn aside from occupations and ambitions for which there seems no longer time, does the soul rise joyous and hopeful, with eyes alert to catch the rays of light that glow atop the sullen clouds and tell

us that beyond the mountain the sun still shines; that it is precisely at life's eventime that glows serenest heaven's unchanging light? The converted soul fares forward into the twilight, knowing that beyond is He whom it seeketh; that beyond is the bosom of God.

Let us start with this then: We all need conversion all the time; and that, because conversion is a process by which we are gradually conformed to the image of Christ. The Holy Spirit in working in us for our conversion strives to possess Himself of the will. In conversion, as in all spiritual life, it is the will that is central. God can do little for us except as we make surrender to Him. There, about the citadel of the will, the great battle for control is going on. Satan is presenting his allurements, which are infinitely various, to the varying circumstances of our lives. He is a very clever observer—Satan. He notes our conduct—the things that most appeal to us. And these we may be sure that he will offer. Amusement to those who have little resource in themselves; who dislike to be alone and depend for their contentment on others. Without suggesting things absolutely sinful, he will absorb the time and attention of such lives and drag them down into the abyss of worldliness, they all un-

conscious, and finally awaking with surprised protest, When saw we Thee an hungered? Opportunity of leadership, and profitless, fussy activity, to those whose weakness is egotistic ambition, to whom the small vanity of conspicuousness appeals. The abundant excuses which twine, as in nets, the slothful, raising mountains of difficulty in the paths of all demands of duty. He excites the imagination till the demands of a devout life seem quite impossible undertakings. He plays upon all weaknesses of character with the matchless precision of a skilful manœuverer. And over against him the Spirit works ceaselessly, hopefully, untiringly, presenting all the motives of spiritual activity, prompting and working through the conscience, setting before us the inestimable riches of the Christ-life, pleading by the need and nakedness of our own souls.

The will—who shall possess that? It is strange that the will is so slow to respond to spiritual motive: and yet not strange, when we remember that it is the will that chiefly has felt the weakening effect of ancestral sin. Little by little, if the process of conversion is going on in us, we find the will detaching itself from sin and turning toward virtue. We get away, first of all, from notable sins. We are conscious of the weakening

of certain familiar temptations, or of an increasing power of resistance where they are concerned. We rejoice at our progress, and feel a sense of strength, and then, alas! we discover that the wiping off of the more obvious sins has only resulted in revealing to us others the existence of which we had hardly suspected. Other sins and temptations appear which prove themselves more obstinate to deal with than those that had gone before, just because their roots had grown so long unobserved. As we go up the mountain-side, mile after mile of landscape is revealed, unsuspected by us as we travel in the plain below. So as we go on in the way of righteousness and the life of the converted spreads out before us in all its luminousness, imperfections start out into perceptibility. And it is wisely ordered. It may be that we should have shrunk from beginning the journey had we known all the hardness of the way.

And the sins that reveal themselves are the most obstinate. It is easy to cut down a tree; it is hard to grub up the roots. These last sins seem to us particularly shameful and disheartening. I do not know of anything more humiliating than, after having overcome some notable sin, to find one's self seemingly hopeless before some

petty, teasing sin, which looks so simple and unimportant in comparison with what we have done. To conquer broad manifestations of pride and then to find one's self helpless before some petty conceit, takes all the bloom off one's humility. To conquer anger in manner and expression, and then to find that we have no power to go farther, or to still the internal tumult of the thought, is inexpressively disheartening. But it is that we have been forming wrong estimates. The sphere of external conduct is the easiest to deal with. It is in the springs of action that the spiritual battles are the sternest. We have all along fought, at least in a desultory way, against notorious sin. We rarely begin to fight for inward discipline till we have become convinced of the need of holiness. And another thing that makes us work now, is that all along, the chances are, we have been fighting *sins* and not *sin*, and there is a vast difference. We have been dealing with this or that temptation or tendency or habit as though it were an isolated thing. But we cannot effectually clean our souls in spots. We must deal with the whole broad fact of sinfulness. That our confessions ought to teach us most clearly. We cannot be absolved from special sins, but only from entire sinfulness. People who are not trained to penitence are con-

tinually missing this, and are repenting from isolated acts of sin, which is no repentance at all. We must be all clean; and to be all clean means dealing with thought and motive as much, or more, than it means dealing with conduct.

And, we say, it is discouraging. It is if we are hasty. We must understand that the working out of our conversion and the parallel work of renewing our character takes time. We did not get sins fastened all about us in a day, and we shall not get rid of the effects of them in a day. Physicians tell us that the poison of pneumonia may vanish in a moment from the system and the temperature fall to normal and the disease be over; but the patient is by no means well. He has all the languid time of convalescence before him. So the pardoned, converted soul must pass through spiritual convalescence and up-building, nourished by the tonic grace of God. Little by little, step by step, is God's method, each stage in advance preparing for the following stage. Saints are not born even in the fires of converting conviction, but are made by the operation of the Holy Spirit. Saul was no saint even when his eyes were open—that fiery temper of his still clung to him long after his call to the apostolate—and the call did not overcome that headstrong impatience

of his. Called to be saints is the phrase. And the great thing is to get the fact of the calling indelibly impressed. Let us be convinced of our vocation to sanctity, and get the ideal of it before us. But sanctity is not our subject at present; rather the patient labor for our conversion which is part of the process.

One cannot insist too strongly on the need of patience. We have made up our mind, and we have set our will to work, and then we do not see why we should not go on easily, why we should break down so often. We tend, pretty soon, to throw the blame upon circumstances. We mean all right, but circumstances over which we have no control get in our way. Our ineffectiveness is due, not to ourselves, but to them. Other people —it is not surprising that they get on; they are differently placed. So we lament. And other people, if we could only know, are lamenting in the same way. In truth there are few things more mischievous to the spiritual life than this feeling about the effect of special circumstances. It is true that no two people are circumstanced alike; but that merely means that no two people have the same character and temptations. Circumstance is a part of the raw material that we have to work with. It is what calls our will into

operation. We are here precisely to dominate circumstance, and not to be dominated by it. And to dominate our own circumstance. There is no more infallible sign of weakness than the lamentation that we are not placed other than we are. A soul that is being converted sets itself to battle with life as it is, and not to wasting time in lamenting that it is not other than it is. The will rises to the occasion. The demands on our time are, no doubt, pressing; it must be a sadly useless life in which they are not; but that merely means that we have to learn economy and adjustment. Our minds are sadly wandering and our attention ineffective; there are few minds that are not; but that is a reason, not for lamentation, but for work. We are surrounded by unreasonable people who upset our quiet and our tempers; most people are; but we have to learn self-control and not to upset other people's tempers. In short, we have to cultivate our own garden, and uproot those particular weeds that happen to grow therein. We may be perfectly certain that if our ground grows pig-weed, our neighbor's grows pursley, and we are about even in the end.

Another temptation that is likely to beset us is this: That God would do well to treat us differ-

ently. He might have provided better. We explain our conduct with side-hits at omnipotence. The woman that *Thou* gavest. It would, we think, be easy and kindly of God to remove some of these temptations. If we were a little more prosperous in this world we should not be hindered by carking care. If we did not have to labor quite so hard we should have plenty of that time at our disposal which priests seem to think is unlimited for everybody. So much, not without a suspicion of temper. But the case is not quite so simple. It were in fact neither easy nor kindly for God to deal with us as we wish. We need to consider that there are quite obvious limits to God's action in the matter. Given the existence of evil and free-will, things quite evidently existent, it is hard to see how God can remove temptation. Temptation means, by one side of it, the existence of evil; and by the other the existence of a will that wants evil. God cannot change that. What God can do, and what He is all the time offering to do, is help you change it. That is, give you grace that you shall no longer choose evil. When you shall have so used the offered grace, the problem will be solved. You will be converted.

There is another feeling that at times comes

over us with an almost overwhelming force to our discouragement. I suppose we have all felt it at times. I can only describe it as the sense of *always*. If this thing could only have an end at some stated time, or when I have done some stated thing, or got to some definite point of development. But it is always! That is what, I suppose, leads so many people, who have started well, to sit down by the wayside. They are converted enough. They have acquired what they consider a judicious amount of religion. But as for faring on to the end of their days; when they have reached one mile-post to see another; to be told, when they have done one thing to go on and do another—all that is very wearying. The spiritual director is fertile in expedients. If you give one dollar, he suggests that you might give two. If you make your communions once a month, he thinks that twice would be better; if you make it once a week, he still thinks that there is room for improvement. And it were well for awhile—but always! And the weariness of never attaining! How monotonous the years look! And is religion merely a converted daughter of the horse-leech? Such moments come.

And is there any way of resisting them? I think so, partially, at any rate. And that is by

taking another point of view. I have already pointed out that we get away from sin by cultivating the virtues. And that thought will help us here. As conversion progresses there ought to be less need for dealing with sin. It is dreary work pulling up weeds all the time; and, moreover, there is only negative profit in it. We must go on and plant flowers.

Being converted means growing the flowers of the spiritual life—and there are so many flowers to grow, when we shall come to think of that part of our subject. When we get to the flower planting we shall find that fascinating work. There is no weariness then even though we have to keep our eye on the weeds lest they spring up again. And then the fruits! The fruits of the Spirit—how gracious that sounds! In the meantime our experience has been born. The words of a hymn drift in:

> "Well I know thy trouble,
> O My servant true.
> Thou art very weary,
> I was weary, too."

Let that help us for the present.

The defensive is never a good attitude in warfare with evil. It implies that the most we hope

to do is to hold the ground we have. It implies, that is, an altogether inadequate idea of our vocation. We ought to hope for ever new conquests and fight on as though we did. We are going to win ourselves to ever more perfect service.

For conversion is not simply the turning from self, it is the turning to God. It is putting ourselves more and more at His disposal. We are prone at times to think that we have well accomplished this, especially in some glow of enthusiasm and fresh dedication. But after a little experience it turns out that the surrender was less complete than we had thought. There were reserves. Not intentional reserves, but reserves that came from this, that we never at any moment see *all* life. We surrender frankly enough to what we see, but the surrender involves so much that we did not and could not see. As life advances and experience broadens we are ever being fronted with what seem new demands for surrender. And it is well that this should be so. We cannot rest on the basis of the surrenders once made. Our religion can never be a religion of the past; it must always be a religion actively present; a religion ever making fresh demands upon us. One feels oftentimes that the trouble with much of our religion is that it became fossilized in a re-

mote past. Really, a good many people's religion represents an immature stage of development. They are doing the same things in the same way as twenty years ago: saying the same prayers, frequenting the sacraments in the same degree. Whatever else may be implied in such a state of things, growth or increasing conversion is not implied. The soul becoming more conformed to God may expect that God will test it by increased demands, and will rejoice in them as the evidence of its own vitality.

And thus going on, the converted soul may expect to gain ever new points of view. The action of the Holy Spirit in us will result in a greater clearness of spiritual vision. The mists of passion will be swept away, and the air purified, and we shall see life and its incidents in their true proportions. We shall come to understand the spiritual values of things; to see them as related, not to the passing and temporary, but to the eternal. And in an especial way we shall come to understand the spiritual value of common things. When we have reached that stage we may perhaps flatter ourselves that we have made some progress. The religious value of the common is a broad subject and a fruitful one. To get rid of a certain

romanticism in religion is greatly to be desired. That religion is everyday work and connected with just common things is one of the lessons we need. The great artist does not seek out uncommon things; he looks for the uncommon and unnoticed aspects of common things. He catches his subject in a certain mood or aspect. So we are to catch the daily life in its spiritual aspects. The unconverted, or the half-converted soul mourns over the unspirituality of its surroundings. The converted soul converts its surroundings. It spiritualizes all life. It understands, if you will, that dishes may be washed, or clothes mended, in a spiritual or an unspiritual way. It is a matter of a central purpose dominating all circumstances and making itself felt through them. Jane Austen, writing her exquisite books on a corner of the sitting-room table, amid the chatter of the family, is suggestive of spiritual analogies. Bishop Wilberforce said that he found a cab, as he went from one engagement to another, an excellent place to say his office. There are souls to whom one feels that religion must be luxurious in its presentment, or it does not appeal: to whom the type of service is of much more importance than it ought to be: who find themselves

annoyed and distracted by the color of the vestments, or by discords in the music, and are rigidly dependent on times and seasons. There are unfortunate souls to whom religion spells Sunday, and to whom all week-day services are an eccentricity of the clergy. Healthy religion is the reverse of all that. It is independent of setting. It pervades all the life, not sewing patches of worship on life, but making the life itself an act of worship. People who have no time for prayer would find the time come, if they would learn to use any opportunity; if they would learn to pray in offices and kitchens, and going to and from work.

Conversion, too, is furthered, when we understand how great is our own part in the matter; how much depends on coöperation. When we have said that conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit, and no one can come except the Father draw him, we are as far as possible from having excluded human agency. We have not to sit down and wait for God to convert us; we have to set deliberately about the matter of our conversion. We have to set ourselves to the deliberate use of means: prayer, self-examination, the sacraments. We have to settle with ourselves

the end, and that its attainment is worth any amount of labor and trouble; and then we have to adopt the means, general and special, which are suitable to the end.

The end is the important thing at the outset. It will most likely mean a most difficult thing—changing the objects of our desires. We are desiring—What? That seems to me an all-important thing to get clear. We do desire God and spiritual things, we say, with a certain amount of honesty. No doubt, we desire them under circumstances like the present, when they are put plainly before us: we desire them on Sundays and in church. But that hardly meets the conditions. Do we desire them steadily and persistently? Do we desire them all the time? Are you going to desire them when you get home? Or are there other desires, thrust for the moment into the background, but which are the habitual desires of your life? The issue is very plain and very important—what does actually rule your life? The answer is the answer to the question, Are you being converted? If, after all, it turns out that this world, and what this world can give, are of prime importance to you, and the spiritual desires secondary, the only practical thing that can occupy the atten-

tion is to change all that, and set yourself to realize the transcendent importance of the spiritual.

And then, the primary question being disposed of, secondary questions present themselves. We find that there are certain passions and appetites working in us, and have perhaps attained to habitual indulgence. They point out the details of your work. The passions and appetites are really the raw material of character upon which we have to work. They are colorless in themselves; it is the direction that they take that is significant. Let me illustrate that a little, for it is of great importance. When we think of passion what most readily occurs to us is that passion which usually manifests itself as anger. Now that in itself, apart from any special manifestation of it, is the quality of a strong character. Whether it is going to work good or harm, be a source of strength or weakness to you, depends upon the direction you give it, the way you discipline it. If you allow it to run riot uncontrolled, it is of course ruinous. The merely passionate person, continually flaming out in anger, is not only weak, regarded in himself, but an intolerable nuisance. It is even worse with the continually aggrieved person. But it nevertheless re-

mains that the thing itself might have been the source of strength—the passion might have been disciplined into a virtue. For that is the truth of the matter; the raw material of passion and virtue are identical. For what would anger have been if restrained and disciplined? Surely it would have been transformed into persistent, energetic force. It would have become just that determination to succeed which is deterred by no obstacle, that fiery zeal that succumbs to no difficulty. Or take another passion—take pride. What is it but a morbid manifestation of a thing altogether good? It is improper, as distinguished from proper self-love; that reverence for the self as the child of God, as an immortal being for whom Christ died; that love of self that leads us to desire the best things for self, and to cultivate ourselves to our full possibilities. A true self-love never seeks for self other than the best and noblest. So we might run through the whole catalogue of possible failings and show that they are equally possible virtues. And the working of this transformation is the principal sign of our conversion.

There is one more thing to lay stress upon. Conversion, as we have seen, is a gradual process. It presupposes the surrender of the immediate,

I suppose that that is quite one of the most difficult things that it falls to us to do: to choose deliberately the future, and to work for the future; to refuse steadily to be turned aside to gains that offer themselves at once; to decline gratifications and pleasures and many legitimate things, simply because our end is in the future and we cannot afford to be distracted from that. It is easy enough to form an ideal of life and what life really means. We are continually doing that under the stress of some stirred feeling. But to pursue it persistently under all conditions; never to lose the sense of its urgency; never to allow it to become subordinated to anything else; never to be so overwhelmed by the immediate as to lose our power of vision; never to yield to that subtle temptation to our sloth which would adjourn the important to a more convenient season; that is the difficult thing. For it is not at all that we are preparing to act in the future, but that we are acting *now* with reference to the future. We are going to achieve by and by. Meantime others seem to be achieving and we losing. Others have been sowing and are now reaping, and we still have no harvest in sight. And results do so appeal to, and satisfy, a human being. Yes, it requires strength of will and intensity of purpose,

but there is no other way of attainment. They do it for a corruptible crown, and we for an incorruptible.

And so we fare on. The first stage of the journey is bleak and weary and wind-swept, and our minds continually revert to what we have left. In comparison with this rocky wilderness, parched and waterless, Egypt was pleasant, and we miss the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks. There, at any rate, we ate bread without scarceness. And Thou hast brought us out to die in the wilderness! But the road grows easier. From spiritual mountain-tops, after rough climbing, we get glimpses of Canaan. We learn to eat of the heavenly manna and to drink of the water from the living Rock. Egypt fades off into a dim memory of fatal slavery, and the eye scans the horizon for a glimpse of the green hills of the future land. The compensation for letting go our hold on the world is that God becomes more and more to us—not a vague formula of probable Deity, but an actually present Friend. Surrender means not only giving up, but attainment; and when we have attained to peace with God we never regret the peace we had with the world.

"How good it is, when weaned from all beside,
With God alone the soul is satisfied,

Deep hidden in His heart!
How good it is, redeemed, and washed, and shriven,
To dwell, a cloistered soul, with Christ in heaven,
Joined, never more to part.
How good the heart's still chamber thus to close
On all but God alone—
There in the sweetness of His love repose,
His love unknown!
All else forever lost; forgotten all
That else can be;
In rapture undisturbed, O Lord, to fall
And worship Thee.
No place, no time, 'neath those eternal skies—
How still, how sweet, and how surpassing fair
That solitude in glades of Paradise,
And, as in olden days, God walking there.
I hear His voice amid the stillness blest,
And care and fear are past—
I lay me down within His arms to rest
From all my works at last.
How good it is, when from the distant land,
From lonely wanderings, and from weary ways,
The soul hath reached at last the golden strand,
The gates of praise!
There, where the tide of endless love flows free,
There, in the sweet and glad eternity,
The still, unfading Now,
Ere yet the days and nights of earth are o'er,

Begun that day that is forever more—
Such rest art Thou."

O Blessed Spirit of immortal Love, convert us, with our whole souls, to Thyself: that as Thou vouchsafest such good gifts to the undeserving, Thou mayest bestow yet greater on the devout, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

O Blessed Comforter, Spirit divine, convert our minds, we beseech Thee, to deeds which shall be pleasing in Thy sight: that Thy rebuke may not prove by our neglect a greater cause of punishment, but by our amendment, a loving admonition, through Christ, our Lord.

We beseech Thee, O Spirit of love and truth, look not on the multitude of our wickednesses; but draw away our weakness from sin, and guide the wills of Thy servants to what is right, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

O God, the Comforter of the humble, and the strength of the faithful, be merciful to Thy suppliants; that human weakness, which by itself is prone to fall, may be evermore supported by Thee to stand upright; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

VII.

THE COMFORTER

MEDITATION VII.

THE COMFORTER

Let us listen to the words of the Apostle—

"BE STRONG in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

Let us try to picture to ourselves—

That white-robed army of martyrs which has so marvellously exemplified the strength of the Lord and the power of His might in all ages of the Church. Recall the scene at the martyrdom of one of the earliest of them, St. Polycarp, the pupil of St. John. When the old man enters the stadium he hears a voice saying, "Be strong, and show thyself a man, O Polycarp." Imagine the scene. The crowd; some eager for Polycarp's death, others only eager for a show. Hear the proconsul saying, "Have respect to thy old age: swear: reproach Christ." Hear the holy Bishop, "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury; how then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour." The stake follows. He is strong in the Lord to the end.

Let us consider in the first place—

That St. Polycarp was merely following the footsteps of his Master, who endured the Cross, despising the shame. In all the Christian centuries multitudes have followed the same road—men, women, children. The world has exhausted its ingenuity in inventing tortures for them. It is not only the Church in the first flush of its enthusiasm that has yielded the fruit of martyrdom; in our own time the mission fields of China, of Africa, have produced the same spirit. Again, men, women and children, just issued from heathenism, have walked the same path—unshrinking. What is the source of this strength? It is the same in all ages: God the Holy Ghost. He makes men to-day strong in the Lord.

And consider again—

We are called to martyrdom. Martyrdom means witness-ship. We are not called to witness by blood and death, but we are called to show the world the spirit of Christ and the power of the Holy Ghost. Every sincerely Christian life is a life of witness to the power of the Gospel. Men, seeing the constancy of martyrs, believed in Christ; they saw in it the Spirit of Christ. Do they see that in my life? Am I a living testimony

to the truth of the Gospel? Or is my life a blasphemy of the Lord and Saviour, who never did me any wrong or injury? Do men looking on us take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus?

So pray—

That you may be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might; that you may trust yourself utterly to that strength. Try to realize better the willing power of God; to trust yourself more completely to the might of His Spirit. Remember in all crises His promise: My grace is sufficient for you.

Lord of all power and might, who art the Author and Giver of all good things: Graft in our hearts the love of Thy Name, increase in us true religion, nourish us in all goodness, and of Thy great mercy keep us in the same, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

One of the very elementary lessons of the Christian life, and yet one of the lessons that we are slowest to learn, is that which the apostle teaches when he tells us to cast all our care on God, for He careth for us. The hardness of life is

largely a matter of life's loneliness. We isolate ourselves from the source of help. We understand the power of human sympathy; we hunger and thirst after that. And yet human sympathy is a very limited thing, even though we could get all that we crave for. Life sinks into depths and runs into dark paths where it cannot follow. But there is a sympathy which is inexhaustible and unfailing—the sympathy of God. To those who have penetrated its secret there is nothing to tell. They know what it means in the hour of loneliness and desolation to enter within the sanctuary of the love of God, to lay themselves at His feet, to pour out their heart to Him, and to feel the inflow of the divine sympathy; the consoling, quieting, strengthening presence of God the Holy Ghost.

But it is not only, perhaps—though it sounds paradoxical—not chiefly, when we are weak that we need this realization of the divine strength, but when we are strong: when, that is, we feel the pulsing strength of youth, the self-reliance of manhood and womanhood, the successful attainment of prosperous age. Confidence in our own power and self-sufficiency is one of our greatest temptations. We look out on a well-ordered and a successful life and say, "Is not this great Babylon that I have builded for the house of the king-

dom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" Believe me, the temptations of strength are the supreme temptations. There is profound wisdom in the apostle's "When I am weak, then I am strong," for it is then that we are less likely to forget our limitations and the need of God.

Now one of the most significant titles of God the Holy Ghost is that of Comforter—the Holy Ghost the Comforter. It does not mean, He that gives comfort or sympathy, but He that gives strength. It is that side of His work that we are made familiar with in confirmation, when He comes to confirm or strengthen the soul—to endue it with spiritual power. The spiritual power, of course, is what we designate otherwise as grace. It is the power that lies at the root of all sacraments. It is the thing indispensable to the spiritual life—for the spiritual life is a life lived, not by the motives and energies of this world, but by the motives and energies supplied by the Spirit of God.

Let us view the spiritual life, then, as a life supported throughout by the active presence of the Holy Spirit operating on our spiritual nature. And let us remember at the outset that this aid of the Spirit is not capricious or lawless; not some-

thing that we may possibly attain, and possibly not. Let us understand that it is pledged to us—we are entitled to it.

We are entitled to it because the Holy Spirit is the spirit of Christ, abiding in His Body which is the Church, and administering the things of Christ as His Vicar. We are parts or members of that Body. By virtue of our incorporation into the Body of Christ at our baptism, we become sharers of all the gifts and graces of that Body. We need, do we not, a little more boldness in our religion—boldness to claim the promises of God? We are apt to shrink from acting on those promises. Now it is not rash or impertinent to act upon them in the expectation that God is going to fulfil them. Rather, not to do so is the mark of a feeble faith. Boldness in reliance on the promises of God is the mark of a stalwart faith in Him. In our Lord, St. Paul says, we have boldness and access with confidence to God. We have gained much, if we have gained that. We are so timid and shrinking about our religion, with a fear of launching out into deep places, with an underthought that if we do God will forsake us. We recognize that our religion really demands of us that we should advance; that we should take up a deepened, more consecrated way of life; but we

distrust our strength; we fear, as we say, that we shall not be able to keep on. We are like those timid sailors who for centuries hugged the shores of continents, looking out over the tossing, fretful sea, with vague curiosity as to what world might lie beyond, but ever clinging to the shore, ever fearing to trust themselves to the unknown that might be beyond the horizon. After all it might not be the lost Atlantis or the Isles of the Blessed that they would find, but the edge of the world. As one thinks of them, doubting and hesitating for centuries, one wonders that there was no man found with the courage to sail over the edge of the world, if need be—but to go out in any case. We need a faith which is robust, which is willing to go out into the unknown at the word of God, which is willing to begin the new, not because it sees the end, but because God has promised the end: which does not cling to the shore of custom and say, If we lose sight of that we know not where we are; but which looks to the promise of God and says, Lord, I will follow whithersoever *Thou* goest. All I want to know is that it is Thy will. A faith which will begin religious practices boldly, and follow them faithfully and perseveringly, in the knowledge that God is going to bless and do much for us. Oh, if we were only

more courageous with God, if we expected more of Him, how should we be forwarded in the spiritual life!

And beware of waiting for some indeterminate period in which to do this; some time when we shall be better, or more at leisure, or more sure of ourselves. That is a seemingly incurable tendency of human nature—to think that it can make itself, at least partially, worthy of the gifts of God. We shrink from offering God just our unworthy selves, ashamed of the poverty of the offering. But that is just what God wants—our poverty, not our riches. What God offers to help is, not our strength, but our weakness. I am to come to God just because I have nothing, just because my whole life is a shameful story of weakness and neglect. Religion is not a reward, but a help; not a crown, but a foundation. It is precisely the marvel of the love of God that while we were yet sinners He loved us. The self-complacent, the self-righteous, God has no use for; it is the soul overwhelmed by the thought of its failure that He wants. He wants, not that we should order the house of our life, and make it clean and sweet for Him, but that we should open the doors, just as it is, all foul and disordered, and let Him in to sweep and garnish it. To let the Holy Spirit

enter and drive out all evil spirits and dwell there in a purity that He Himself makes. Our invitation is not, Lord, I am clean. Come to me. But Lord, I am vile. Come Thou and cleanse me. Lord, I am weak. Come Thou, and strengthen me.

Learn to lean hard on God. It is so difficult to get rid of the feeling that *we* must do things; that we can be successful. The one thing that we can do is to accept God's invitation and obey; make use of all the rich means that He has provided in the Church of His grace. Of course we must do that. There is no healing for those who cry, Lord, Lord, and do not His will. A life which looks for the help of the Holy Spirit, is a life which settles itself down humbly and obediently to spiritual practices. I do not want here to dwell on the details of a sacramental life; we shall have to do that elsewhere. Only now remember that the grace of the Holy Spirit comes by practical and orderly use of the means—all the means—He has appointed in the Church. An attempt to build on any other foundation is failure from the outset.

But passing that, there is another thing that must be part of a life of spiritual growth—the practice of the Presence of God. We believe in

the omniscience of God; that God sees all we do; that He knows the innermost thoughts of my heart. "Thou art about my path and about my bed and spiest out all my ways." What is the practical outcome of that belief? It is living in the consciousness of God's presence; the going about our daily duties with the consciousness that they are done in God's sight, constantly in our thoughts referring our acts to Him. I am beginning the day—my business, my household duties—Thou God seest me. Thou art present here with me in this commonplace work. Thine ear hears these words that I am speaking. In this temptation that I am under, Thine eye sees just the resistance that I am making; Thou art ready to support my strength should it fail. This trial I am passing through, in lack of sympathy from those who ought to help; through unreasoning blame; through blind stupidity; through jealousy and selfishness; the difficulty I find in fulfilling my religious duties through the prejudice and unreason of others; Thou seest all that. The hard grind of life which often threatens to crush me in mere materialism—Thou knowest all that. To accustom oneself to hold God tight in all the details of life; to insist with oneself that one realize that God is not afar off, unheeding, like

some heathen Baal, needing to be awaked out of sleep, but that God is here and now a participant in all that we undergo—that is to practise the Presence of God.

And it is—this Presence—not that of an interested observer, but of an indwelling guest and friend. It hushes our soul to think of it, not as doctrine, but as fact. In very deed God is within us; at least has been within us. This material and earthly body, dust of the dust of the earth, is the temple of the living God, the abiding place of the Holy Spirit. "Know ye not that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost?" We are speaking, when we pray, not out into the desolate silences of interminable space, where the voice seems to lose itself in the hopelessness of inconceivable distances, but we are communing with the infinite Spirit which interpenetrates our very being. It is not space that is infinite, but God. Truly Thou art a God that hidest Thyself; but Thou hidest Thyself in the innermost recesses of my soul, and thence I hear Thy Voice in answer to my prayer. Daughter, thy faith—thy living trust in Me—hath saved thee: go in peace.

"Thou who givest of Thy gladness
Till the cup runs o'er—

Cup whereof the pilgrim weary
  Drinks to thirst no more—
Not a-nigh me, but within me,
  Is Thy joy divine;
Thou, O Lord, hast made Thy dwelling
  In this heart of mine.

"Need I that a law should bind me
  Captive unto Thee?
Captive is my heart, rejoicing
  Never to be free.
Ever with me, glorious, awful,
  Tender, passing sweet,
One upon whose heart I rest me,
  Worship at His feet.

"With me, wheresoe'er I wander,
  That great Presence goes,
That unutterable gladness,
  Undisturbed repose.
Everywhere the blessed stillness
  In His Holy Place—
Stillness of the love that worships
  Dumb before His face.

"To Thy house, O God, my Father,
  Thy lost child is come;
Led by wandering lights no longer,
  I have found my home.

Over moor and fen I tracked them
  Through the midnight blast,
But to find the light eternal
  In my heart at last."

We are right, then, to be confident; to be confident of the possession of a strength that never fails those who rely upon it. We have the promise of God—the Presence of God; what remains then that we do?

The possession of strength and the use of strength are two things, like the possession and use of knowledge. The young man or woman goes out into the world equipped with an education, as we say. But failure may follow as well as success. We need not only to possess instruments, but to have acquired skill to use them. More people fail, perhaps, from lack of practical ability, than from lack of theoretical knowledge. We need to learn the practicalities of the spiritual life. We must learn to use God's presence, if I may so say. What I mean is that we must discipline ourselves to think first and to act only afterwards; to refer our plan, whether of word or act, to God before we execute it. How much friction in a family, for instance, might be easily enough avoided, if we spoke as in God's presence! The hasty judgment, the

unnecessary criticism, the sharp answer, would die unuttered, to the great impoverishment of the divorce court and the exceeding honor of God. A great many things that we do would remain undone if we first took God into our counsel and then acted. We should effect a great saving of time thereby. It is possible to acquire an habitual control when all the self impulses are held well in hand. Really, uncertainty of temper, and levity of speech, and general lack of self-poise, are species of self-indulgence. Strength of character shows itself first in the conquest of *self*. Self is finally conquered when it is made the servant of God. His service, if we could only understand it, is the only perfect freedom.

My dependence is my strength then; which is only another way of saying that I become strong when I substitute for my own strength the power of the Holy Spirit, consciously at first, and then habitually and instinctively, referring my acts to Him. But the Christian course is more or less an experimentation with life. We are called to constant advances, and therefore to constant tests of our acquired strength. We are children learning to walk, we sometimes say. But that is not the case, for the child has to risk its steps alone, and we never go unsupported; we go

holding the hand of God. The rule we would lay down is this: *Lean hard on God;* you cannot lean too hard; never take any risks unsupported. That is one side; the other side is, that leaning on God you can do anything and go anywhere. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," says the apostle, out of his rich experience. So we get back again to the quality of boldness; we no longer fear to go even on forlorn hopes for God. We dare undertake work we do not see the end of or the means for, confident that God will guide to the end and supply the means. We begin to learn to do things just because we are convinced that the doing of them is God's will, without bothering as to how they will probably come out: we perhaps begin to understand that failure itself may be a means of promoting the glory of God—and when we are ready to fail for God we have gotten a good way.

So we learn gradually what faith means; learn it by this continual trusting of ourselves to God, launching out into ever deeper waters. We begin to see, too, that what paralyzed us in the past was really distrust. We failed to take God's promises as personal to us, and declined to trust ourselves to them. We never attained that courageous

initiative which means so much in the Christian life. We contented ourselves with waiting for positive commands of God. Now, God rarely commands; usually He invites. And one of the qualities of a saint, I take it, is a certain readiness to accept invitations—to seize opportunities, to fill any place that is vacant. In offering our lives to God, that surely should be our attitude—that we are merely looking for places to fill.

The contrast is that the indifferent person looks for excuses for not filling them; will never move, save under the compulsion of a command. But there is a certain eagerness about faith which leads it to offer itself continually, to seek ever new and harder service. It would be well to question yourself as to the matter: whether there is any eagerness in God's service, whether you appreciate it as a privilege to do God's work, no matter in how humble a way; or whether, after all, such activity as you call religious is not due to a compulsion of some sort—self-love or social obligation, it may be. The test, I repeat, is just willingness to do anything that you can do. It was Mr. Gladstone's rule always to take such places as were offered him, deeming that those that offered them were the proper judges of what he was fittest to do. While other men contended

for this or that place, and were willing to disrupt governments and hinder public business if they did not get what they wanted, he took quietly what was offered him, doing his duty in whatever place God gave him. After all, we are the least wise judges of our powers; we had better assume that the call of providence to a place implies our fitness; that the call of God to do a thing implies the grace of God to enable us to do it.

In thinking of the strength bestowed upon us by the Holy Spirit we must not neglect one special sphere of His operation—that connected with faith. We have seen that the Holy Spirit is the teacher of the Faith; that all truth comes from Him; that He is the Revealer of the Faith as declared in Holy Scripture; that He guides the Church that it may teach the Faith truly and without admixture of error. He provides, therefore, that the Faith may be always ascertained by man. We may say that from the objective side of teaching and statement all has been done that needs to be done. But it is obvious that all do not know the Faith and follow it. That is because there is another side to the matter. We have to take into account the same element we have met with so often—individual appropriation. Now simple

acceptance of what the Church teaches is a very beautiful and praiseworthy thing, and is perfectly adequate for salvation. But anything beyond that humble acquiescence in what is taught requires a certain amount of intellectual exertion. The first reason, then, why people fail, is that, while they are not willing to receive the Faith humbly, they are at the same time unwilling to make the intellectual exertion which is involved in the personal verification of the Faith by study. Now the Catholic Faith is not an unintelligible body of dogmas which theologians wish to cram down our throats; but it is a beautifully harmonious statement of the truths of revelation. It is open to anyone to study it to any extent he chooses, and such study is rewarded by the perception of the inherent reasonableness and satisfactoriness of the Christian religion. And it is part of the work of the Holy Spirit to guide, not only the Church as a whole, but individual students as well, to an intelligent appreciation of the Faith. There is no reason why anyone should not attempt such study. But I would point out that it is not such study, merely to raise questions without any attempt to pursue them. One runs across a good deal of questioning and uncertainty and doubt to-day. For the most

part it is not very serious in itself, but it is certainly serious to those concerned. A question is raised in some way, let us say, about the atonement or the real presence. It is usually raised, not about the Catholic doctrine itself, but about some ignorant statement of it; as that in the atonement God is represented as punishing a guiltless person for the sins of the guilty; or that the doctrine of the real presence teaches that the natural body of our Lord is present in the sacrament, or that we worship the elements of the sacrament. The difficulty, I say, may not be at all a real one in itself, but it may be very real in the mind of the individual whose it is. But obviously that person's duty is, not to nurse the difficulty, but to set himself to find the truth. He is bound to find whether the Catholic religion does actually teach what it is alleged to teach. Now one great difficulty with our generation is that it is intellectually awake enough to see difficulties about religion, but it is not intellectually persevering enough to pursue the questions raised to their solution. Yet if we choose to bother about such questions at all, that is what we are bound to do. We cannot satisfactorily combine intellectual alertness and intellectual laziness. A difficulty raised in religion may be dealt with in one of two ways: by putting

it out of our minds and going on with our practical duties; or by pursuing the study of it to the end. The trouble is that there are so many people who are possessed of an insane conviction that there is something supereminently intellectual in the possession of doubts. We are getting to be a race of intellectual *poseurs*, whose vanity is gratified by the expression of difficulties about the Christian religion. The Christian religion, no doubt, has its difficulties; but they do not lie in those crude and grotesque misunderstandings of it which are the staple of the average doubt of to-day.

I would recommend to any one that he pursue the course of loyally accepting the Catholic Faith as taught by the Church, striving to understand what it means, no doubt, but striving to understand in the first place its practical application to life, rather than its metaphysics. But if anyone wants to study further, let him first offer himself to God in a holy life, and then trust that God will guide him, as He has promised, into the truth. No good can be expected from an unsanctified study. The bane of the world has been ungodly students. "He that doeth My will shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." To one who is not doing His will there can be no

enlightenment. I do not see why anyone who does not know God experimentally should hope to understand the mysteries of God.

We may especially look to God the Holy Ghost to preserve us from temptation to our faith. We certainly need His blessed guidance to-day when the press swarms with attacks upon Christian doctrine and Christian life; when infidelity has taken that subtle form known as liberalism, and tries to shame us out of our faith as an outworn superstition. There are comparatively few people who have not suffered under this form of attack; who have not become hesitant about one or another article of the Faith, not, I repeat, because of any intellectual difficulty, but because of the confidence with which it is denied. Our familiar friends, in whom we trust, whisper doubts. Organizations, calling themselves Christian, have abandoned the very foundations of Christianity. We need in such circumstances to seek perpetually the guidance of the Holy Spirit; to search our lives constantly against sin; lest sin finding an entrance, doubt, its natural consequence, shall follow. I do not hesitate to say that a good deal of the infidelity in the world at any time is the consequence of sin. Men do not believe because they do not want to obey. There are theories of disbelief that are

methods of self-justification invented by men who do not want the restrictions of Christianity. I do not mean, of course, that all doubt rests on laxity, but the average doubt of the average man. He does not want to live honestly, purely, making his confessions and worshipping God and doing the work of the kingdom of heaven, and therefore he has difficulties about absolution and the atonement. The woman who wants to lead a useless, worldly life naturally does not believe in religious practices.

I do not see how anyone who is not doing his utmost to follow the life of our Lord and His saints can hope that God will so guard his steps as to defend him from the subtle dangers of unbelief and misbelief. I do not see how anyone who habitually places himself under the influence of ungodly companionship, whether in society or in books, can hope to keep peace and purity of mind. It is a practical rejection of God's offer to guide us. We have a noteworthy case in the life of George Eliot. There a pure, true, religious woman, with a very limited religion, to be sure, deliberately placed herself under the influence of unbelievers, with what result to her faith we know. A desertion of the life of Christianity is almost always a matter of an ill-

informed believer placing himself under unchristian influences, and then gradually dropping Christian thought and practice till the inevitable end comes. The cases are few in which a really devoted Christian has lost faith through mere intellectual assault. God the Holy Spirit does not abandon those who are seeking His guidance and doing His will.

Finally, one of the great actions of God the Holy Ghost on our souls is the imparting to us of the gift of perseverance. How many people in this world, with good intentions enough, fail just for lack of perseverance. It is the characteristic trouble of the young. Life is so full of many sided attractiveness, that they prove incapable of settling down to steadiness of character. Perseverance means seeing an end, and seeing it clearly, and never relaxing effort till it is attained. Perseverance expects to win, all that it does win, by hard labor. It does not count on luck or chance, but goes clear-sighted to its end. It does not shirk difficulties, or expect that God will make its way altogether plain and easy. But it looks on difficulties as things to call out energy, not things to discourage it. The fact that there is an end worth having and worth laboring for is the important thing. Here is where the strength of

Christianity lies—that it does undoubtedly present ends worth laboring for. Indeed, considering the uncertainty and transitoriness of life, nothing else has ever presented ends that were even much worth while. And it does not present those ends, as it is so often misrepresented as doing, as mere far-off possibilities, but it rewards us with constant attainment as we go on. The mere possibility of rising above what we all recognize as the passions and appetites of the lower nature, would seem enough in itself; and we know that men and women do this under the impulse of the Gospel day by day. The priest can tell you of souls breaking loose from sin, putting off degrading habits, changing the whole character of life. The power of the Gospel is not a theory, but a fact. It is a fact in the higher reaches of the spirit.

The attainment of spiritual qualities is for each one a possibility—their attainment now. The difficulty is not where people place it, in some unearthly quality of spirituality, but is merely the difficulty of persistence, of pursuing the end until the end is attained. Watch God's saints how they go on from grace to grace.

But perseverance is an heroic quality; and so few of us are heroes. What characterizes the average man and woman, especially in matter of

religion, is indecision and indefiniteness; and they are fatal things. One sometimes thinks that we never quite get our minds made up to anything. To-day we determine; to-morrow we doubt, and the whole matter has to be settled again. We are indefinite as to what we want, and we are undecided as to whether we shall try for it. One thing I am certain we should pray for with all our hearts, and that is that we might get our minds set —set on righteousness as the supreme thing.

If once the Holy Spirit has given us grace to brush aside all the cobwebs of hesitancy that beset us, and has given us grace to see our end clearly, then we shall fare forward with glad hearts. We shall be as those who seek a city; and we shall heroically strive until we attain it. We shall have gotten rid, for one thing, and an important thing, of that haunting fear that is at the back of all doubt. Fear as to where God leads us—that paralyzes; fear as to the sacrifices that we may be called to make. We should go more readily if there were not so much of this dread that we should come out unexpectedly where we do not want to be. But spiritual heroism is the brilliant triumph of the soul over all such fears—fear of poverty, fear of suffering, fear of sacrifice, fear of calumny, of isolation, of loss of every

kind. And there is no serious piety without such heroism. It comes to us, when we once perceive that the gain is infinitely more than any possible loss can be; for the gain is God Himself. Is not that enough?

"Not built with hands is that fair radiant chamber
  Of God's untroubled rest,
Where Christ awaits to lay His weary-hearted
  In stillness on His breast.
Not built on sands of time or place to perish,
  When tempests roar—
But on the mighty Rock of Ages founded,
  It stands forever more—
Not only in a day of distant dawning,
  When past are desert years,
But now, amidst the turmoil and the battle,
  The mocking and the tears,
That chamber still and stately waits us ever,
  That sacred pure retreat—
That rest in arms of tenderest enfoldings,
  That welcome passing sweet.
O home of God the Father's joy and gladness,
  O riven veil whereby I enter in!
There can my soul forget the grave, the weeping,
  The weariness and sin.
O chamber, all thy agate windows opened
  To face the radiant East—
O holy Temple, where the saints are singing,

Where Jesus is the Priest—
Illumined with the everlasting glory,
Still with the peace of God's eternal Now,
Thou God, my Rest, my Refuge, and my Tower—
My home art Thou."

VIII.

A PERSONAL FRIEND AND GUIDE

MEDITATION VIII.

A PERSONAL FRIEND AND GUIDE

Let us listen to the words of Scripture—

"I SLEEP, but my heart waketh."

Let us try to picture to ourselves—

St. John, contemplating the vision of the heavenly world. He is on earth in bodily presence; essentially he is in heaven. What is present to him is not Patmos and its scenery, but the worship of heaven; the choirs of the angels; the hosts of the redeemed; the throne of God and of the Lamb. So far as earth is concerned, he sleeps; but the result of his abstraction from earthly things is the intense activity of his spiritual nature, no longer distracted. His heart —his whole spiritual and intellectual nature—is awake.

Let us consider, first—

That the realization of spiritual things, in our present state, requires intense effort. This world presses itself importunately upon our attention. Much of our time is, of necessity, occupied with it. We are in constant danger lest it swallow us

up wholly. We attempt spiritual activity—prayer, meditation—and we are distracted. The clouds of earthly thoughts and interests roll in and hide the blue of heaven. One of the elementary things that we have to acquire, therefore, is the power of abstracting ourselves from our surroundings, and concentrating our spiritual powers on spiritual things. We need to acquire the sleeping senses and the waking heart; a heart which amid the distractions of life is open to the influences of the Spirit of God. "I sleep, but my heart waketh."

Let us consider in the second place—

That our attention is absorbed by the things that we are most interested in; that we have, as we say, most at heart. We may be occupied in other things, but there is a subconscious occupation with the supreme interest. Down in the silent depths of personality there is an unconscious process going on, which at times manifests itself. It is so in love; the love of a mother for a child, for instance. The mother is not loving the child only when conscious of loving it. There is a subconscious clinging of the heart of the mother to the child all the the time, which only occasionally becomes conscious. It is so with the love of

God. We are not all the time thinking of God, but if we love Him at all, we are loving Him all the time, and the love grows all the time. Only occasionally the heart wakes, and we become conscious of the love.

Pray then—

That you may more and more sleep to all things in this world that draw the soul from Christ. Pray for a wakeful heart to perceive His will. Pray for a spirit of personal devotion to God the Holy Ghost.

O God the Holy Ghost, the Guide and strength of Thy people, convert us unto Thyself with our whole heart, that upon our devotion Thou mayest increase to us those gifts which in spite of our unworthiness, Thou hast bestowed through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

One of the most completely satisfying things in life is friendship. In any deep sense it is one of the rarest things. Pure and deep love is easier found than pure and deep friendship. We all have friends, of course, in some limited and partial sense: persons with whom we are intimate, and in whose company we take pleasure. We are sorry to separate from them; we remember them

with gratitude. But friendship in the full meaning of the word is other than that. It is founded in some subtle sympathy of nature. It brings about a complete frankness of intercourse; an *abandon* by virtue of which one can appear perfectly natural to another, and can to another reveal the very soul. Its essence would seem to be an instinctive mutual understanding, so complete that there needs no explanation. One is secure in revealing oneself, for one is certain of not being misunderstood. Love is founded other where; and one of its limitations is that it does not remove misunderstanding. It is founded in passion, not sympathy. But friendship is perfected in sympathy. It gives nature an outlet; it enables us to show ourselves to another, without fear of that other's criticism. While we dread criticism in general, we court the criticism of friends. We are willing to talk frankly and without defense of our failings, secure that we shall be told the truth; secure that we shall be told the truth in love.

This human friendship, so rare, so perfect, is but the adumbration of a more perfect thing. Most human relations are the shadows of spiritual realities; they find their full significance in the relation of the soul to God. You remember that

wonderful passage in St. John, where our Lord says to His Apostles: "Henceforth I call you not servants, but I have called you friends." What a wonderful glimpse there is there into our possible relation to God. Far back, Abraham was called the Friend of God; but the fulness of friendship could not be reached under the old covenant. Then man was separated from God by a barrier impassable. It needed the Incarnation and the coming of the Spirit, the regeneration and the sanctification of the soul, to make that relation a spiritual reality. Now we are the regenerate children of God, grafted into the Body of His dear Son. Now we are the temples of the Holy Ghost, flooded with the presence of divinity. Our souls are not the field of action of divine power, but the dwelling places of a divine Person.

We have tried to get plain to ourselves this fact, that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person in relation to us as persons. Let us now try to think of that relation from a special point of view, that of friendship. The essence of friendship, I said, was to be found in sympathy. This sympathy, of course, if the relation is to exist at all, must be mutual. The friend of God must be in sympathy with the purposes of God so far as he knows them.

And we know the purposes of God for us: "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." With everything that is involved in that; every aspiration of our souls, every effort of our lives, every daily step we take, no matter how feeble, we know that God is sympathetic. And He is sympathetic because He understands. He sees at once the motive prompting us, and the weakness and the inexperience that thwart it of its full effect. He knows when the motions of His grace are producing answer in us; He sees them clearer than we can see them; and may we not think that where we can see only failure, He sometimes sees success?

For God the Holy Spirit is the Educator of the soul. He knows His own ends, and His own means, and the imperfection of His material. And like a wise educator, He is surely tolerant of the first steps, of the half-comprehending attempts, of the mistakes and failures of his pupils. He knows our limitations and our strength. He understands, as only God, not we, can understand, our temperaments, dispositions, inherited and acquired characteristics. He perceives advance where we think that there is failure. He perceives failure where we imagine success. He checks us here and encourages us there; He closes

this path and opens that; He disposes of all life with a view to its sanctification.

It is quite impossible that we should understand all this in detail; that the reason and the method of God's action should be always plain to us. But what we surely need not fail to understand, is that through all our checkered experience, God is our friend. It is not the hand of rough discipline, though the discipline seem rough, that is leading us. It is not the severity of stern justice that is punishing us, though we deserve punishment; but it is the sympathetic wisdom of friendship which seeks to make itself understood by us. It lightens life very much, if we have this confidence in His friendly dealing—confidence in the *fact,* though the method seems incomprehensible.

For we must expect that God's dealings with us will involve a large element of mystery. There is a certain narrow materialism of mind much fostered by certain phases of modern education, which is impatient of mystery. To say that a thing is mysterious, seems to it like an attempt to dodge an intellectual difficulty. Why not say plainly that you know nothing about it? Because that would be untrue. We do know something about it. We know that it is, though we may not

know its why or wherefore. We know of the actions of God in the disposition of life that they are. It would be absurd to deny that we have so much knowledge, because we have not more. And a true intellectual training increases our sense of the mystery that underlies all existence. On all sides we are hemmed in by the inexplicable. And if this is true, as true it is, of the world of natural phenomena, how much more shall we expect it to be true of the world of grace? No man can explain God: He escapes all human formulas. No man can explain the actions of God. Only He Himself can explain them; and we are helpless to deal with them save so far as He has explained them.

It is part of God's friendship for us that He has explained to some extent. The Holy Spirit is the Revealer of His will. It were absurd to refuse to act upon His explanation because it has not what we call scientific certainty. Were we consistently to refuse to act save where we have scientific certainty, we should find action in any department of life impossible. He who will act only on scientific certainty is unfit for practical life. There is another kind of certainty which in things spiritual justifies action; and that is the certainty of faith. We have confidence in God.

We accept His explanations of life, as attaining its fulness and perfection through consecration to Him. We accept such partial and fragmentary knowledge as He gives us. We act upon that in confidence because we call ourselves His friends.

After all, it is quite possible to over-emphasize our ignorance of the action of God upon our lives. If we want to go to a distant place, it does not trouble us much, provided we know that the place is, and is accessible, that we do not know all the intermediate steps. When we feel a certain bewilderment we need to insist with ourselves that the end, at any rate, is certain; that God is willing our sanctification by the action of the Holy Spirit; and that the fact of such action is certain, however vague may be our understanding of the immediate process.

We read with surprise, and perhaps with somewhat of envy, the Bible stories of how God guided His people of old. We have to remember that the method of God, if one may put it that way, has changed. Of old God guided men from without. He went before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night: He manifested Himself in acts of power. In the dispensation of the Holy Ghost, God has changed His point of operation. He now acts from within. He is

not external power, but indwelling Spirit. And how vast a difference this is to us: for it implies on our part spiritual senses and a spiritual intelligence. If we are to hear God, we are to listen, not for a voice speaking in the thunders of Sinai, but in the silent promptings of our spiritual faculties. God is dealing with us on a higher plane, and a plane where He can deal with us only in so far as we are prepared to be dealt with.

I would have you consider, then, whether any hesitancy as to the present will of God and His actual guidance, be not in some measure due to spiritual carelessness: I mean because we have neglected spiritual cultivation, and have not cared to act upon so much of guidance as we actually have had. The seizing of spiritual opportunity is the means of developing spiritual capacity. We all neglect much, and that is at least one cause of our weakness. We have all had, at least, the gifts of the Holy Ghost in baptism and confirmation. We all have open to us the full privileges of the Gospel. Before we complain of the obscurity of God's will, it were pertinent to ask, What use have we made of what God has given us? There is the great map of life—the Word of God. Have we thrown it down, as a peevish child throws down its grammar, com-

plaining of its obscurity, or, by faithful and prayerful study and meditation, have we striven to let the Holy Spirit speak through it to our souls? Certainly no one has any right to complain of lack of guidance from the Word of God, who never made a meditation. "Thy Word is a light unto my feet and a lantern unto my path," is true only of those who have used it faithfully and patiently. The experience of God's saints is that God's Word is true unto the uttermost and they love it. Whose fault is it if our experience has not verified that?

Or take our sacramental life. What we get out of our communions is largely a matter of what we want to get. A routine communion, made when it is easy or convenient, cannot bear fruit. There seems to be an impression that the insistence of the clergy on early and fasting communions is an ecclesiastical fad. In reality, it is founded upon the essentialness of preparation to a fruitful communion. An early and fasting communion secures at least the elements of preparation. No external means, of course, can secure the internal preparation of the soul; but they can suggest and aid it. The communion that is carefully prepared for some time in advance, and which takes place with concomitants of sacrifice, and is made, not

merely as a pious act, but with definite intention, that is, which is made with the purpose of attaining a specific end, and which is followed by thanksgiving, will not be fruitless, if there be any truth at all in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Or again: take that guidance of God that comes through circumstance. If we would know what God wants, we must try to understand what our circumstances mean. They point to what God expects us to do. It is plain, in the first place, that God expects the service of our lives. If we do not acknowledge that there is nothing further in the matter of religion to be said. We have simply taken the position of atheism. Passing that, our circumstances surely point to the kind and degree of service. An invalid is providentially excluded from active work, but has, as plainly, been apportioned a service of another kind. As the example is a suggestive one, let us dwell upon it for a moment. Such an one is apt to say, There is nothing that I can do. But surely there is the rich opportunity of intercession. Such a life may be, we dare not say how valuable, in its unceasing pleading with God. It may cast the protection of its wide sympathies over how many souls! And then it has opportunity to cultivate so many beautiful virtues! Patience,

forbearance, thoughtfulness, cheerfulness, which in the rush and hurry of the busy life so many of us have to lead, are apt to get jostled out. What a wonderful power of example there is in the patient cheerfulness with which so many invalids meet the life of suffering. We look at them and understand that they have seen the guidance of the Spirit and are growing very near to a Lord who suffered.

Or take the opposite extreme, the busy life. While the invalid is tempted to say, "I can do nothing for lack of strength"; the strong is apt to say, "I can do nothing for lack of time." But time is never lacking where there is the spirit of consecration. I am strong; therefore I may rise early and consecrate my day. There is the morning sacrifice at the parish altar; or there is the half hour caught for meditation that I may go out spiritually brightened for the duty of the day. The duty presses on almost every moment of the day, but I have learned the secret of compression and intensity. I cannot stop to make long prayers, but now and again I snatch thirty seconds to recollect myself, and put myself in God's sight; to renew my consecration, to recall the resolution that I made at my meditation, to send some swift message of intercession up to the throne of God.

I can keep a thread of thankfulness for my strength, for my work, moving through my day. I can do my work honestly and thoughtfully, gladly and cheerfully, so that it is a true offering to God, a sincerely religious work, though it be but the routine of an office or a household. There are so many ways of serving God that one cannot imagine a life so at a disadvantage that it cannot find some of them. It is mere superstition to suppose that the service of God must be only under certain forms. Many occupations are valuable opportunities just because they leave the mind and spirit free. We can pray as we go about the house. We caught but five minutes for our meditation this morning. Well, we got a start. We have our theme. Let us develop it as we are doing mere routine work, or as we walk along the street. Is not that better than the paltry things we think of? Surely, there are no circumstances but are suggestive of ways in which God is guiding us.

The main thing is to look for guidance in life and not out of it. It sometimes looks as though people were expecting some special revelation to be made to them. But we must insist that God is with us all the time, and that the normal direction of our lives will result from their circumstances.

May I say again that we are always being tempted to under-value our spiritual importance? We are ready enough to insist upon our social importance, our value in life, when very likely we are not important at all. But we are spiritually important enough to be created and redeemed. We say we are very plain, simple folk; well, one does not conceive that God is specially interested in geniuses. He claims the proprietorship of all souls, and therefore of ours. It is inconceivable that He should not indicate His will to us.

Think then of what I may call the guidance of special endowment. St. Paul's exposition of the Spirit's work is explicit in this matter. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." No two human lives are run in the same mould of character, or placed in the same setting of circumstance. But all are what they are by the operation of the Spirit. This one's gift or capacity differs from that other's, but does not differ in its source —it is from the same Spirit of God. St. Paul warns us against despising our own gifts and admiring someone else's. We are to understand and use what we have. We are to recognize in what we have the guidance of God.

One has, for example, a special faculty for teaching. The faculty for teaching is distinctly

a gift in St. Paul's sense; indeed he mentions it. Well, its existence carries with it a responsibility for use. If God has made me a teacher, I ought to teach; that is, I ought to look for an opportunity to teach. It may be the only opportunity God gives me to gather a few children in a Sunday school class. That looks small, but in reality it is at once a great privilege and a great opportunity. What can be greater than to have a few souls committed to one, in the formative stage of their life, when habits of thought and action are being formed. There are few forms of pride worse than that which despises the vocation of a Sunday school teacher. Half a dozen children is magnificent opportunity.

And consider the disguised opportunities of teaching that social intercourse affords. Let us suppose that one has had the opportunity of education and used it. One has attained a position where we can speak intelligently of religion; where one understands something of the spiritual perplexity and moral entanglement of the average modern person. With courage to speak and tact in speaking, what a power one may be. It is a priest's business, we say. Not at all. It is a Christian's vocation to be always ready to give an answer concerning the hope that is in him. There

are a multitude of cases which never get up to a priest, where, it may be, a friend opens her heart a little, and so gives a passing glimpse of what is going on in her mind. A great deal depends on catching a person in just the right mood. There is a certain ready tact in knowing when to speak and when not; a watchfulness which can wait for opportunity and seize it when it presents itself. There are points in the history of souls when the right word will turn the balance. It is a sad and discouraging thing that the servants of sin, the advocates of false systems, the adherents of infidelity, are ready to seize their opportunities; they are assiduous in setting their traps for unwary souls; it is the servants of truth who fail; who sit quietly by and permit the temptation of souls without a protest. Why is it that Christians, of all people, have so little to say for themselves? That they timidly listen to, and pass in silence, assertions which they ought to be able to expose in a few words. Is it true that we regard doubt and criticism as a proof of intellectual vigor, and while we hold the Catholic Faith ourselves, fear to be considered not quite up to date if we manifest it?

Or it may be that God has given us, in the distribution of gifts, the faculty of leadership. It is

a very valuable gift, and one not altogether easy to use with advantage. The leader, perhaps more than most people, needs humility. Now humility is a just appreciation of one's powers and place, and readiness to serve in God's way. The humble person places himself completely at God's disposal. If one has the power of leadership, one ought to be ready to lead, and leading, to serve. The organized work of the Church affords great scope for such capacity. Every parish, nearly, is an object lesson. It has guilds that languish for lack of efficient leadership; it has a list of waiting works, the material of which is at hand, but the organizing power for which has not been discovered. As one takes a walk through the country, one is struck by the enormous waste of productive power; land still lying waste which brings nothing to the possessor. Every parish is like that. It has its waste unproductive places; its fallow ground waiting the energy of the cultivator. The priest dreams of work, but does not find the workers. And all the while the energy that might be productive is visible. In the average parish it is drained off to mere secularity —to clubs and social organizations. Without criticising them, one may ask, Is such expenditure of energy the fulfilling of a Christian's vocation?

Has not the kingdom of God prior claims? Has not the Holy Spirit distributed gifts for a purpose?

Much in the way of practical guidance may come of desire. "Covet earnestly the best gifts." Aspiration after the more perfect is one of the things that God blesses and rewards. "By desiring what is perfectly good, even when we do not quite know what it is, and cannot do what we would, we are part of the divine power against evil." There is an inspiration of God in our aspirations. The thing we want, the person we want to be, is a very good index of our character. We are content to be so little, when we are called to be so great. There are moments, and they are our better moments, when our souls are kindled to spiritual desire, and it seems to us that God is calling us very near to Him. But we lack the sustained energy to follow our aspiration. There was a real call and guidance of God; there was only a fitful and intermittent response. It seemed for the moment that we had become interested, not in our salvation, but our perfection.

It is worth while, perhaps, to consider this. Let us put it in this way: The things that we are vitally interested in are the best explanation of our character and its trend. The energy with

which we pursue our interests is the test of the vitality of that interest.

What, then, are we interested in? To be interested in an object means, of course, to be actively occupied with it. Someone has said, "If anyone wants to have a healthy sense of his own limitations, let him ask himself in what and in how many things he is interested." Breadth of interest in religion is one of the hopeful signs of a growing character. There are people who are interested in this or that practice, or some special work, whose interest is limited to those things. Their interest is not in spiritual things as such. Our Lord's rule is a practical as well as an ideal one: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." If that be our starting-point, we shall soon find that all things belonging to the kingdom are matters of concern to us. We shall concentrate on some special work, perhaps, for practical purposes, but not to the exclusion of other interests. I have actually known parishes where there was a rivalry between societies; factions identified with different guilds, each going its own way, and ignoring the work of others, if not even jealous of it. Such an attitude needs not to be characterized. If it is the kingdom of God that we are interested in,

we are concerned with all attempts to forward it. Division of work is necessary; division of interest is not.

And depth of interest will be signified by energy of pursuit. We expect, of course, human nature being what it is, and the mixed nature of the membership of the Church being such as it is, that there will be found everywhere people who conceive their Christian function as being ornamental. People whose attitude toward the Church is one of condescending patronage. Who think that they have fulfilled their duty toward it by lending it a certain countenance by an occasional appearance at its services, or by an occasional contribution to its work. They are the people who furnish most of the criticism in a parish; who resent appeals; and whom nobody likes to approach with a subscription list. They talk about the Church continually needing money, and want to know why that mysterious entity designated as "they" do not do this or that—why "they" do not have better music, or why "they" do not look after the poor. What such persons need is conversion—a sense of their own wretched sinfulness. Such do not supply, they consume energy. We may test ourselves as to where we stand by the expenditure of energy. What dur-

ing the past year, for example, have we been energetically interested in? Compare your religious energy with your social. You have not sat about with folded hands all the year; you have been doing something. We may assume that the routine of necessary work has been gone through, but beyond that there has been much occupation of one kind or another, useful or useless. Not the total energy of life—a life you owe to God—but of the extra energy, so to call it, what part has been consecrated? I think it is such questioning that tells the story of a life. What a life cares for, that it energetically seeks.

God, then, presents us with the opportunities of life, and if we are interested, we seize them. The opportunity is the guidance; the evidence of God's will; the unveiling of the mind of the Spirit. Hence appears the uselessness of the oft-repeated statement: I am not conscious of any special guidance. I do not know what God wants me to do. If we will stop thinking vaguely about the field of life, and fix our attention upon our faculties and opportunities, we shall get the answer to our questioning.

Mostly, the trouble is, we fail to be interested in the special opportunity that God places before us. The element of self-will enters; we see what

we can do, but we do not want to do that. We think that we are fitted for something that God, perhaps, does not think us fitted for, and we decline to take the first step. One conceives the tone with which a woman says—Oh! work in a guild! the Sunday School! the sewing school! and goes off to her club. One admits that it is more interesting to read a paper on Michael Angelo, than to teach some ill-smelling urchins the facts of the Gospel—unless, to be sure, one happens to be interested in souls. It is easier to talk generalities about social science than to pick out badly made seams—unless one happens to think God of more importance than statistics. But it will hardly do to plead no guidance. And, indeed, as in most other things, it is the first step that counts. First steps are difficult; interest grows as we advance. The first stages of work are stages of investigation and discovery, and may very well be chilling. That is not a phenomenon that is peculiar to religious work; the first hours in an office or school-room, one imagines, are never cheerful. So the first hours with a Sunday School class are dreary, no doubt. The children are strange and restless, and you have not yet made contact. But you make the effort: and is there not infinite joy in the winning of love and confidence, and exer-

cising ever increasing power over young lives? One comes home from a guild worn out with the attempt, let us say, to interest people in missions. But after one gets rested, the joy of being admitted to even the smallest share in the glorious work for which saints and martyrs have spent themselves, is compensation. We have failed, we say. Perhaps—failed in what we wanted to do. But we have not failed to serve God. It is better to fail for God than to succeed for the world.

For, to return whence we started, the secret of the whole matter is the friendship of God. Friends understand each other sympathetically. We do not need to be told what our friend approves or disapproves, likes or dislikes. We know that instinctively through that subtle sympathy which has alone made it possible that we should be friends. And the more intimate matters of guidance come back to that sympathy. We do not need to be told—we know. When I have striven long to frame my life after the divine model; when I have long striven to judge my conduct, nay, my very thoughts and desires, from God's point of view; when I have aimed to conform myself to the mind of Christ; then I pass out of the regions of darkness and uncertainty into the clear shining of the divine will. I do not any

longer derive my certainty from laws and rules, but from my sympathy with the aim and purposes of God. Then shall be fulfilled the words of the prophet: "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be My people. . . . And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more."

IX.

ZEAL

MEDITATION IX.

ZEAL

Let us listen to the words of the Psalmist—

"MY zeal hath even consumed me."

Let us picture a scene narrated by S. Mark: "They were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them, and they were amazed, and as they followed they were afraid." It was near the end. They were going up to Jerusalem for the last time. There was a sense of approaching crisis on our Lord. There was something in His bearing which had not been there before; something new and strange; something that aroused and startled. He set His face as flint. It was the bearing of a man with a sense of work to do—a work which was to end in His own torture and death. A man bracing himself to meet that calmly and fearlessly. A man going forward with a sense of what lay before him. Such work requires *zeal.* "My zeal hath even consumed me."

Let us consider, first—

Our Lord enters life with perfect knowledge. He does not, as we, go out to meet experience blindfold. "He knew what was in man." His possibilities; his failures; his weakness. Knowing all this, He enters into His work. How strange! "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him: and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" What indeed! We only understand our own value when we see what our Lord was willing to do. For His work of redemption He found no sacrifice too great. He put on zeal as a cloak.

Let us consider, second—

That primarily this was because it was the will of the Father. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work. I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day. But I have a baptism to be baptized with." The same will of the Father is urgent to us. Urgent to us to complete the work of Incarnation. "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." We carry on the work of Christ.

Let us pray, for zeal to be consumed—

Lord, who didst bid Thy Seraph purge the

prophet's lips with fire from off the altar, so that he might be free to preach Thy word unto the people, whether they would hear or whether they would forbear: give Thy priests and people within the Catholic Church pure and wise hearts, that they may desire to go whither Thou dost send, and do that which Thou dost will, in the power of Him in whom we can do all things, even Thy Blessed Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

If one were to ask by what one word our Lord's life could be best characterized, there would no doubt be a good many answers: some would say, love; others, sacrifice. For myself, I should be inclined to say, zeal. But probably the difference would only be on the surface. We would be looking at the same object from slightly different angles. Love—sacrificing love—certainly is of the essence of our Lord's life; but zeal is there, too. Zeal is the warmth of love.

And zeal is written large on our Lord's life. Think for a moment of the Incarnation: the Eternal Son willing to enter human life purely to aid us. And to enter human life under the conditions He did. That ministry of His was a wearying work. The utter loneliness that must have been His, without anyone who could under-

stand or sympathize. The constant dissappointment, when He tests human nature, and finds it give way under His hand. It sometimes seems to me that what we call our Lord's sufferings were not His real sufferings. His real sufferings were the limitations pūt on His work by the incapacity of human nature. The misunderstanding; the inability to see what He was trying to do; the hopeless distance in aim and ideal which separated Him from even the best of His disciples, and made any real sympathy between them impossible. It seems to me that quite the hardest of human trials is to be compelled to do one's work in unsympathetic surroundings. It requires some intense motive to carry one through such a trial as that. And we do feel through our Lord's life the steady pressure of zealous love. One feels in Him a wide and deep purpose which so possesses Him that He can overlook and disregard all the pettiness which hinders, all the incapacity which checks, all the density which cannot understand. He goes steadily on with His work because after all it is not His work, but the work of the Father which has been given Him to do.

And there, I think, are to be seen the things we need: to realize life as the work of the Father;

and to realize it so largely that human pettiness cannot trouble us. We have a divine commission in this life. We may or may not have found it, but we are in the world for a purpose. Life is not a trivial plaything to amuse ourselves with. It is the very serious business of our service of God: the field of our probation. With varying talents we have been placed here for the purposes of God. We have not begun to understand life till we have understood it as service. That independence we feel, that sense of self-worship, that impatience of responsibility for the detail of life, that restlessness under any sort of control, are all so many indications that we have missed life's meaning. That independence we are ever asserting is not the way of strength and success, but of weakness and waste. For any strength and success of life which is not merely self-indulgence must come from its being directed to noble ends; must be the result of a service that sees that the purposes of my life are not my own purposes, but the purposes of God. And, having once acquired that view of my life, as manifold service of my Maker, I have acquired a largeness and breadth of ends which are stimulant and sustaining. A life of the large ends and firm purposes which are implied in its consecration to God's service may of course be a life which is

much checked and hindered on its way; it is bound to be a life which under present conditions will miss much of human sympathy. For the routine Christianity of our time sympathizes but slightly with the broad ideals of the Kingdom of God. But it is also a life which will, like our Lord's life, be sustained and carried on by its "inner principle of strength—the power of the Holy Spirit which works through it."

It will also avoid another of the dangers of the life of service to which we are all bound if we are all in earnest in the pursuit of holiness. We necessarily deal much with petty details. Life is made up of things in themselves small. The trivial round, the common task are the lot of most of us. But it is possible to treat petty details in a petty or in a large way, according as we relate the details or do not relate them to some end outside themselves. We may be merely swamped by them. They may become pressing and teasing things. But it is also possible to subordinate them to the principle of service, and to recognize in them means of serving God. It is difficult to be enthusiastic about detail, even a religious detail. Even my prayers and my sacraments, if they are isolated religious acts of myself, are in danger of becoming petty. They gain significance

as I gain in appreciation of them as a part of my consecrated service, as part of my self-devotion to God. Out beyond the immediate thing I am called to do, is the larger thing to which it is related. The purpose of God through my life; the glory of God and the prosperity of His Kingdom—these are things to be zealous about, and my own little part in them is a thing to be zealous about also.

Our lives are given to be lives of ministry. We neither live nor die in isolation, for ourselves. We are related to, and depend upon, one another in numberless ways. But no life of ministry can be sustained by the mere contemplation of its immediate objects, or its immediate results. We do not find very much to stimulate zeal in the contemplation of humanity. Humanitarianism breaks down from the mere unbelievableness of its object. Humanity as a whole is too crass and stupid to inspire one. If zeal is going to live, it must begin by being zeal for God. It must be heaven born.

And true zeal is heaven born. It is the breath of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is represented to us as *fire*. "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with *fire*"; which we might perhaps paraphrase as a fiery Spirit of Holiness—

a zeal producing spirit. "He that is near Me," our Lord is reported to have said, "is near fire." Now of course we know that all that is hopelessly out of date. If there is any one characteristic which is hopelessly lacking in modern Christianity, it is fire. We are not disposed to regard anything as of enough importance to be zealous about. We must not be very much in earnest about anything—least of all, religion—lest we incur the reproach of fanaticism. A man was lately reported to me as becoming insane, and the evidence was quite conclusive—he talked about religion during office hours. We regard it as being conspicuous evidence of the virtue of tolerance to regard the beliefs and practices of the Christian religion as being open questions; as being matters of taste and feeling rather than of obligation. A fiery spirit—zeal—is not at all good form, even in persons whose profession might suggest it. The exigencies of the pulpit, to be sure, may make inevitable a certain appearance of zeal, as the exigencies of the stage a certain appearance of passion. But it is not necessary to take it too seriously. The clergy are expected to stir up a certain amount of dust, which will peacefully settle if we leave it alone. There was another temper

in the saints, but the temper of the saints is quite inconceivable.

We are in danger of lapsing—clergy and laity alike—into a mild pietism, a decorous worldliness. We preserve the appearance of serving God, but we will not serve Him other than mildly. We will continue the forms of religion and speak of it respectfully; but we will speak in platitudes, and not speak loud lest we shock the nerves of the respectable nonenities who make up the bulk of our congregations. The Church has sunk to sleep—it would be bad manners to awake it. But the question sometimes presses: is it our Christian duty to sing the Church to sleep?

And then there come back other conceptions of a Christian life. Our Lord going up to Jerusalem in all the sternness of His mission—going on in the work of the Father to meet the agony of the Cross, and the over-awed Apostles following Him. And the Apostles themselves, having been baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire, not to preach the Gospel of it-does-not-matter, but to turn the world upside down. And of their worthy successors through the ages, the men and women who are really of religious force in the world, keeping the Christian community, always ready to

fall back into stagnant sleep, stirred up and active. the Holy Spirit has unmistakably touched men's lives and the touch was fire. And we must make up our minds that we must have the fire of God in our lives if they are to be effectual. What a world this modern society is to look upon! What a world of mistaken effort, and profitless labor, and wasted energy, and misdirected work, and mute needs! A world stupidly going down to destruction; and before all things else in need of God! A world of men and women leading careless and indifferent lives in the very presence of eternity; sung to sleep by their own prophets who prophesy the smooth things they like to hear! What a world to stir the zeal of the servant of God. And the divine pity of Christ which strives to reach it and arouse, checked and held back by His own servants, broken against the wall of our indifference! Ah! what we need to-day, more than most days, is to be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

The Holy Spirit influenced men's lives once—touched them and they burst into flame. When the Church has been really alive to the purposes of God and the needs of human souls, men and women were zealous. Christian society did not look askance upon the man who sold all to follow

Christ more closely in His suffering life. But to-day a man who would leave all for Christ is essentially inconceivable to us. The passionate surrender of life to high ideals, is insanity. We imagine a decorous and restrained service of God in which God is expected to give everything and we nothing—a service which leaves us our sheep and oxen, our olive yards and vineyards to the last fraction, and gives to God pleasant words and bland professions. We can no longer even imagine ourselves faulty. We stammer out in mild surprise, "When saw we Thee naked or cold or hungry and did not minister unto Thee?"

The Holy Ghost has a word by which He characterizes this state, and to me it is one of the most terrible words of the divine vocabulary—lukewarm. It is inconceivable as an attitude of immortal beings. For what does it mean? It means simply that we stand unmoved in the presence of all the supreme issues of life; that God and the work of God are a matter of no interest to us: that we are unmoved alike by the resplendent glories of God's Kingdom, by the bitter cries of suffering humanity, and the urgent needs of our own spiritual nature. No wonder that the Almighty loathes that state; that the risen Jesus cries, "I would that thou wert either cold or hot."

There is strength even in sin. There is something almost admirable in the man who will risk hell to have his will. But the listless idler whom nothing arouses, to whom nothing appeals, who drifts through life at the mercy of every current, is altogether contemptible.

We are all of us liable to periods of lukewarmness. A religious life which has been going on apparently well will meet some sudden obstruction, will become a prey to discouragement, or will simply unaccountably lie down. In most of us emotion and sentiment predominate over the will. And there is a certain periodicity in emotion; we are unable to live in a tense emotional state for any very long time. There comes an inevitable reaction. We have been stirred emotionally in some way, we have been feeling a very keen enjoyment in the practices of religion; and then unexpectedly the emotion vanishes and we find ourselves cold and disheartened. If we are well trained in Christian experience we go on without minding overmuch. We understand that the emotional deadness does not mean a spiritual decline; and we do not permit the state to interfere in degree with our religious practices. But if we are without experience we are apt to allow the emotional state to influence our actions and so pass

into a lukewarm state which, in time, becomes habitual.

The lukewarm person habitually dwells upon the demands of religion rather than its privileges or opportunities. And as soon as one begins to look upon religion as demands, one speedily passes into a state in which the demands seem unneccessary and burdensome restraints. The state is terribly common. Every parish is made up largely of the lukewarm. To them every religious act involves effort. It is an effort even to say one's prayers. Good works are a weariness and a drag. The parish priest speedily learns, to his great dismay, that the energy he thought was going to be spent in advancing the bounds of God's Kingdom is exhausted in the attempts to arouse the vitality of those whom he expected to be his efficient aids. If one were asked to define parish work, one would be inclined to define it as the constant effort to arouse the lukewarm. Probably the most discouraging fact the Church has to face is the fact that it must consume its best energies upon itself; that the powers which should be spent in an aggressive campaign against the world must be spent in preserving its own life.

One would think that the lukewarm person would be the perpetually discouraged person. But

not at all; discouragement is an entirely separate phenomenon. The lukewarm may have begun in discouragement, but for the most part they pass on to self-satisfaction. They are, as a rule, the most self-contented people in the parish. They quite resent the imputation that they are not as they ought to be. They are quite certain that their paltry excuses for standing aloof from the work of God are very valid. They smoothly lie to one about their inability to do this or that. They are not, to be sure, fanatics; but they are quite as good Christians as so and so. But one looks in vain for any living interest in any side of the Gospel. One quite wonders why they think it worth while to play out the sorry farce of their "religion." What they need is repentance, which is quite the last thing they think they need.

Aside from the lost state of their souls, the worst of the lukewarm is that they are a perpetual drag upon the energies of Christendom. They are parasites sucking the vitality of the whole body. There is many a parish which, if it could be cut down to a third of its membership, would lose nothing spiritually or temporally, and would gain enormously in buoyancy and vigor. But we have to live our lives as God has arranged for us. We have to learn to depend utterly upon God. I

suppose that is the lesson of the divine tolerance of the lukewarm; that we should learn to live our own lives uninfluenced by them. The indifference of others, the lightness with which they decline obligation, their trifling with the supreme issues of life, does profoundly discourage us, if we have not learned what, after all, is one of the primary lessons of the spiritual life, that we are not to expect encouragement and seek ideals from men, but are to look over to God. We get discouraged when we look too much even at ourselves. We grow zealous when we look to God.

For zeal results from the degree in which we surrender ourselves to the work of the Holy Ghost. And one of the signs that He is really working in us is a spirit of readiness in God's work—readiness for any work He indicates for us. I would emphasize that, for there are lukewarm workers and they are known by their tendency to select. They want to pick and choose their work. They are willing to do some self-selected thing. But the spirit of consecration seeks only to see the opportunity. It does not ask whether the work is large or small, agreeable or disagreeable, but simply whether God has made it a possible work for it. And moreover it seeks work. You do not have to thrust work upon a

consecrated spirit. It is ever on the lookout. It finds work. There are people who can be induced to do work, and there are people who only have to be guided in the doing of it.

And the same attitude is evidenced in the matter of worship. The worship of the lukewarm is perfunctory routine. The worship of the zealous is ever-deepening self-consecration. Nothing tests us like our worship. The vividness with which we see in it the means of deepening our union with our Blessed Lord; the eagerness with which we make opportunity; the sense of deprivation we feel when we are hindered by circumstances. "How amiable are Thy dwellings, Thou Lord of Hosts; my soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord." We rejoice in God's house; we ever renew our consecration at the altar. We seek the Divine Presence in the Bread which came down from heaven. It is an ever new wonder to us—"Thou gavest them bread from heaven and man did eat angels' food." Before the altar-throne of Jesus, we realize the peace of those who have attained, the peace that passeth understanding, the peace of the Presence of God.

It seems almost contradiction, but zeal is the root of patience. They seem on the surface so very opposite; zeal so fiery and energetic, the very

quality most exposed to the temptation of impatience. We are inclined to excuse impatient people on the very ground of their zeal. And patience is so strong and calm, but also, we are wont to think, wanting a little fire to warm it. But that is our superficial way of looking at things. For what is it that makes us impatient? Impatient in attempting to accomplish good and unselfish works even? Are we quite sure it is, what at first blush we think it is, zeal for the work? Would not a little seeking oftentimes show us that the cause was not really zeal for the work, but disappointment in getting our own way? That is the real secret of impatience. If we have a true zeal for the work of God, we shall be what God is—very patient and long-suffering. God is strong and patient. If we are zealous for the end, and not for the self-gratification of winning it, we can wait. We can endure to make sacrifices even. There is something startling in the power that zeal gives. The power over self which enables one to disregard the immediate gratification and go on for the sake of the larger end. How that comes out so constantly in the missionary work of the Church, as a power to make sacrifices. Take the case that missions so often present to us. Here is a man, accustomed

to all the things of life men usually reckon desirable, well educated, and with all the habits and tastes of refinement which good education implies. And we find him far away from all he was trained to, in the lonely and squalid surroundings of a South Sea Island, teaching the alphabet to naked little cannibals. What patience day by day. Can you imagine a more trying situation for a cultivated man? What zeal! Above all, what hope! A hope that seems absurd, and a zeal that seems ridiculous. It is just such qualities which have been the revolutionary forces in the world's history. It is just the sort of thing the world cannot cope with; it can only look on and wonder.

Zeal is the sustaining power in life and work. We all of us recognize that God has work to be done in this world. I suppose most of us recognize our responsibility for the doing of it. We understand that we cannot take refuge behind the incompetency and neglect of others; that our work is ours by virtue of the Divine allotment and we cannot avoid our responsibility if we would. But notwithstanding, it is not an easy matter to work on persistently. We need something more than a sense of duty to keep us up to the work. The burden of unfulfilled duties is one of the

most wretched burdens of life; but duty, while it presses on the conscience, does not always stimulate the will. We need zeal. And zeal will come to us as we get to understand our true relation to God. We are God's slaves. That, at any rate, is what the Apostles delighted to call themselves; but slaves who have willingly taken God's service because they recognize in that the only perfect freedom. That in God's service they can best put their powers to full usefulness. Slaves, therefore, to whom the service of the Master is the absorbing interest. Slaves, not because the will is bent to the will of God, but because the will is identified with the will of God. We will what God wills; therefore we seek to do what God does. We surrender ourselves that God may work in and through us.

And it is precisely that consciousness of surrender, of identity, which makes the Christian life a zealous life. When once we have seen the world from God's point of view, so far as that is possible for us, the world changes its value. While we look at it as a means of self-gratification, it tends to draw us down to its own level. But when we see it as a thing to be won for God, we have risen above it. We approach life

in the confidence of mastery. If we want, not what the world can give, but what God can give, the world cannot fascinate or control. But seeing the need the world has of God, we come back to it with eagerness to bring it unto God. We take up whatever work God offers and put our best strength into it. Our consuming thought is: This world must become God's world; must be snatched from the power of evil that has enslaved it, and be brought back to the Divine service. Whatever fragment of work God gives us to do we receive with great thankfulness. It is such a wonderful thing to be permitted to serve God.

And when once we have understood that, our work is transformed. It is such a wonderful thing to help God; to be given any work for Him. But if we have never understood the sadness of it! One fancies that looking back on this life from the point of view of Paradise, if in the mercy of God we attain to it, it is not the grossness of our sins that will surprise us—though it will be painful wonder to us how we could have so stained our lives—but what will surprise us is life's little stupidities. The constant offers God made us that we pushed aside, or did not even recognize. We thought it was not in our power to do much; but now we see that was not the trouble at all.

That every day really presented its opportunity of service which we missed from lack of zeal. It was suggested to us that we might do something to cheer up another life, that poverty and suffering had darkened; and we, impatiently, had enough to do at home. All the pitiful moral and spiritual disaster of heathendom called pleadingly over the offer of the mite-box, but we could not see it, and impatiently refused. Perhaps we stopped going to a guild when there were so many demands for money. These things will look so pitifully stupid from the vantage ground of a saved soul. I suppose we shall never really see our lives till we see them in the retrospect of another world. And what soiled and shabby things they will seem! What incompetent stewards we have been of our Lord's money; nay, defaulters, who have wasted that which is not our own. Surely we need zeal to breed in us a spirit of carefulness in the minute things of life.

"I do not wonder," Ruskin said, "at what men suffer, but I often wonder at what they lose." Zeal is a lamp that lights our way lest we lose too much. There is so much that we lose through mere sluggishness and lack of attention; so much we lose because we have an erroneous appreciation of values. That act of kindness which might have

won the approbation of God we let slip, not because we were unkind, but thoughtless. That act of self-denial that we were too self-indulgent to make, was just the bracing discipline we needed. It is so easy to miss the point that the things we really need are not the things our hearts are set on, but quite other.

And there is this other thing about the sustaining power of zeal: it not only is tonic, stimulating us to labor, but sustains us under the sense of failure. Any life that undertakes to work for God is bound to encounter failure, or what for the time being seems to be such. It is even zeal itself that commits us to failure. It is the languid and indifferent that do not fail. Courage will fail; zeal will fail; because they refuse to reckon with the merely practical. Many a cause is won after repeated failures; but the failures were the stepping-stones to success. It is precisely the lesson of Christian work, that other men labor and we enter into their labors; and that we, too, must be content to labor for an end we cannot attain. Our very zeal drives us against the impossible—hurls us against obstacles on which we seem to make no impress, and we die, like St. John Baptist, doubting whether we have not made a mistake. Poor Elijah, under his juniper tree, is quite certain

that he has been very zealous for the Lord God of Hosts; but only failure and exile has come of it. And yet, fail as he had of the thing undertaken, much ultimately was to come of his mission. One thing certainly has come of it to all succeeding generations, the matchless example of a burning zeal for God. The passionate zeal of the man quite irrespective of any outcome, is a heritage we would hardly lose. For there is this fact to be taken into account: that there are circumstances which demand failure; when failure is certain, yet we must go on. The truth of the Gospel must be offered, whether men will hear or not. Sinners must be called to repentance, however certain we may be of the hopelessness of the call. It is one of the crises in a priest's life, *e.g.*, when he faces a parochial situation in which he can succeed or fail, as men count such things, and finds he must deliberately choose the failure. There are situations like that in all lives, and we have to turn our backs on success or happiness or peace, because those things, in the circumstances, mean unfaithfulness to God. The question presses sometimes —Have you zeal enough to fail? It requires a good deal.

And, after all, such failure is only relative. We have not failed of the supreme thing which

lies behind and inspires all zeal, the devotion of our lives to God. Zeal is fire; and to be zealous means that we are passionate for God. One sometimes thinks that we only realize our own possibilities through passion. "Without passion man is a mere latent force or possibility, like the flint which awaits the shock of the iron before it can give forth its spark." It is the realization of what God and the work of God means that is the iron that strikes the flint of our nature till it gives out the flame of zeal. Sometime or other, in some way or other, God does come into every life; He looks us full in the face and offers Himself to us, and we are stimulated by the look and go forth burning with zeal for His service; or we see in Him no beauty that we should desire Him; we turn our backs upon Him and He passes away and the passing is the passing of spiritual life. We see no outward change in the life, but there is the inward change of irreparable disaster. The important thing to remember is, that this is not accidental or occasional, but is the inner experience of every life; that at some time or other it is offered God; and that sooner or later the evidence of the choice shows even on the surface of life. "I think that as men reach maturity they rapidly range themselves in two classes—

those who have a purpose in life, who know what they mean to be; and those who are content to drift." And drifting is not a spiritual attitude. Zeal knows what it means to be; it means to be the devoted of God.

Zeal is a progressive quality. We sometimes kindle slowly. But if our religion is not routine of habit, nor lukewarm pretense, it is because there is the fire of God in our souls. If the zeal is there it will grow if we only permit it. It grows by its exercise. We need to give zeal plenty of room to act. There is a very miserable quality of our Anglo-Saxon nature; that false shame which so stands in the way of religious expression; which keeps the emotional side of our nature cramped and chilled. We dislike to manifest any emotion, most of all religious emotion. We dislike to put ourselves in evident opposition to other people. But zeal cannot grow under such restraints. It must love God enough to endure the coldness and contempt of men. Love God enough; there is the root of the matter. We are zealous about our love. And to love God is to be eager to offer ourselves to Him; to be eager in His service to undertake to make Him known to the world. There is nothing men will not undertake for love. It was the love of Christ

which constrained the Apostles to take up His work. It was the love of Christ which made them zealous to make the world His kingdom. And the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of Divine Love which, shed abroad in our hearts, kindles them with His own fire. The Holy Spirit is spiritual fire, and His indwelling presence is the life of our life. He it is that makes and keeps us spiritual. He it is that leads us to turn away from the material and seek spiritual things. And that is the only thing that is permanent—the seeking of spiritual things.

Prayers—

Grant to Thy servants, O God, to be set on fire with Thy Spirit, strengthened by Thy power, illuminated by Thy splendor, filled with Thy grace, and go forward by their aid: Give them, O Lord, a right faith, true love, perfect zeal. Grant, O Lord, that there may be in us simple affection, brave patience, persevering obedience, perpetual grace, a pure mind, a right and clean heart, a good will, an holy conscience, ghostly strength, a life unspotted and unblamable; and, after having manfully finished our course, we may be enabled to enter happily Thy Kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

O Lord Jesus Christ, who wast ever occupied about Thy Father's business: Grant that we may not be weary in well-doing, but may exhibit, in active zeal and devotion, the operation of the Holy Spirit of Thy Love which Thou hast shed forth upon us.

Look upon us and hear us, O Lord the Strengthener, and assist those endeavors to please Thee, which Thou Thyself hast granted us; as Thou hast given the first act of will, so give the completion of the work; grant that we may be zealous to finish, what Thou hast granted us to wish to begin: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

X.

SANCTITY

MEDITATION X.

SANCTITY

Let us look to heaven—

A LAMB stood on Mount Zion, and with Him 144,000 having His Father's Name written on their foreheads—these are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."

Let us picture—

The white-robed army of heaven. These are they who have come out of the turbid and staining life of earth, unwounded from life's battlefield. They have entered into their rest. They enjoy the fruits of their labors. The Church associates the Holy Innocents with these; one wonders if they are all children—these flowers of heaven. One comes back from the vision feeling that after all our much striving and much speaking, sanctity is the essential thing. "These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." What is there beside that?

Let us consider, first—

The fruit of holiness is the gift of special priv-

ilege. They sing a new song, and no man learns that song save they. They have a special relation to our Lord. They follow the Lamb. The greatest of privileges is to be near God. That was what S. James and S. John asked and our Lord could not give. It is given to those for whom it is prepared—perhaps to those who are prepared for it. It is prepared for the pure in heart. They shall see God.

Let us consider in the second place—

What power has the thought of holiness in your life? Do you think much about it? Is it a real ambition? Have you ideals of conduct which issue in holiness? Are you trying so to control the course of life that its issue shall be the approval of God? As the evening of life draws on, and you realize that you have failed in many things, are you certain of success in one thing, that with all your strength you have sought God?

Let us pray—

For sanctification.

"Soul of Christ, sanctify me—
Body of Christ, save me—
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.

O good Jesu, hear me,
Within Thy wounds hide me.
Suffer me not to be separated from Thee,
From the malicious enemy defend me,
In the hour of my death call me,
And bid me come to Thee;
That with Thy Saints I may praise Thee
For ever and ever. Amen."

It has been said that the Father makes men; the Son makes Christians; the Holy Spirit makes Saints. That work of the Holy Spirit is what we now have to think of. We have been thinking of His work as a turning of us away from sin: let us think of it as a turning of us toward God.

The *Holy* Spirit. His name gives us the keynote. The Spirit is not only holy in Himself, but a source of holiness to others. The aim of His work is to produce Saints. He effects that which our Lord prayed for His disciples: "Sanctify them."

We have then, first of all, to think: What is a saint? and how is a saint made? And perhaps we may take that last point first: That saints are *made*. It has always seemed to me that there are few things more worth study than biography—and especially religious biography. It tends to correct that almost instinctive mental process by

which we remove the saints far from us. I fancy we like to do that. A saint seems a much safer and more comfortable person set upon a pedestal and made an object of relative worship, than when kept down on the level of human experience. So long as we can persuade ourselves that the saint is an exceptional and, indeed, an abnormal specimen of humanity, we are reasonably safe from the pressure of his example—from the contagion of his enthusiasm. He exerts no pressure on our lives. We are quite willing to admire saints from a safe distance. But they are uncomfortable people near at hand; they reverse so many of our conceptions of life and have a way of silently implying by their very presence that we are not quite what we ought to be: that our comfortable theories of life are all wrong. They are a living reproach to low ideals. So they are safest at a distance.

It is strange, is it not, our tendency to resent the compulsion of lofty ideals. A great many well-intentioned people, if they would indulge in a little honest self-analysis, would find at the end of the analysis that they had passed through some such stages as this: That a saint is a very admirable person, much to be commended and ad-

mired. We unhesitatingly commit ourselves to that. Then arises the conception that, if that be true, it were well that we should become saints. Here we enter a caveat that we cannot be saints: our circumstances are such, our business, our life in the world, our necessary manner of life, etc.—they effectually block any attempt of the kind. This seems convincing and we are mostly content to drop the analysis there. But suppose we go on a little. It is quite obvious, as a little study of biography will show us, that saints have not been drawn from special classes and spheres of life, or sets of circumstances. Our assumption that we are blocked by circumstances will not hold in the face of facts. There is no walk of human life, from the throne to the slave quarters, which has not contributed to the white-robed army of the followers of the Lamb. In all honesty we are obliged to face the fact that circumstances are unimportant. Pushed into this quarter, what remains to be said, save, I do not want to be a saint, or I am trying to be one? It is well to get the dilemma fairly put.

Now, why do not I want to be a saint? That takes us back to our first question: What *is* a saint? And I think we can say—not a person on a pedestal nor in a stained glass window, but one

who is simply and humbly devoting his life to the service of God in that state of life in which God has placed him. What we want to realize is the *universality* of the vocation. God does not call some people to be saints and others to be "plain Christians," as we phrase it; and put others in circumstances where they can barely live a Christian life at all. The vocation to sanctity is the universal Christian vocation. Our Lord is not addressing exceptional people, nor does He make any exceptions, when He sums up His Sermon on the Mount: "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." "Called to be saints," is the ordinary phrase by which the Apostle characterizes the vocation of Christians.

All those are called to be saints who are called to be Christians: they are not two things, but one. Saints are those who are set apart to God by the consecration of their baptism, and are corresponding to grace in that working out of their lives. They are by faithful use of their means of grace working out a life in conformity to the ideal of the Gospel. So long as we are in a state of grace, striving for perfection of character, we are going on in the way of sanctity. A saint in the process of making is none the less a saint.

This is where the study of the lives of saints

helps us. If we content ourselves with looking at the end—at the last chapter of the biography, so to say, we learn little. We at most acquire that barren admiration coupled with that feeling that sanctity is remote from our experience. What we need is to study the process by which the end is attained. We start from the quite ordinary boy or girl and go through the completely human experience by which the abounding imperfections of character were dealt with and disciplined; the difficulties of adverse circumstances were met and dominated. It is not the saint's perfect character which is most interesting, but his discouragements and hindrances. It becomes plain to us, as we see saints in the making, that the secret in the matter is not at all exceptional opportunity, divine favoritism, if any one may venture to put it that way, but steady, willing, firm determination. He becomes a saint, not who wills to become one, but who wills so to live that God shall approve of his life. It is the steady going on from day to day in the simple performance of God's will which is the temper of sanctity.

What is to be aimed at, then, is not the performance of heroic acts of spiritual devotion, but the perfect fulfilment of daily obligation. Only we must understand that daily obligation involves

spiritual activity. I imagine that where many fail is not in the round of daily duty, but in a narrow view of daily duty. They fail to see that the Christian's day *must* involve spiritual activity. The amount of activity will vary with the circumstances of the life, but a distinct consecration of the life there must be. It is not the life of good citizens we are called to lead, but of good Christians. Whoever is growing in sanctity, growing in the appreciation of spiritual things, is learning new secrets of prayer and meditation, of sacraments and worship. It is not so much a question of amount of time as of intensity of activity. We must *stress* the spiritual. We may not be able to give a great amount of time to exclusively spiritual acts—we can all give more than we do —but we must feel that such spiritual activity as we have is of immense importance. To take just one point in illustration: to most of us the Eucharistic Sacrifice is an unrealized source of power. There is hardly anyone who cannot be present at the Holy Eucharist oftener than in the past; few who cannot, if they think it worthy the sacrifice, be present at least once outside of Sunday. If the early Eucharist is unpractical, Saints' Days are frequent, and the attendance shows small appreciation of the opportunity. What is the opportunity?

It is the opportunity of offering the Sacrifice of Christ with special intention for your needs; the opportunity of increasing devotion. You feel the lack of that personal devotion to our Blessed Lord that lies at the very root of spiritual action, let us say. Well: how more effectually attain it than by offering the Blessed Sacrifice with the intention of attaining it? We say we believe in prayer; do the actions of our lives show it? If we did, would not the altars of the Church be crowded daily by those whose insistent prayers were besieging heaven with violence? So long as a soul remains indifferent to spiritual opportunity, its earnestness in the matter of sanctity is questionable.

As we look over the field of human life, all this sometimes seems hard sayings. God has called all these to sanctity, we ask? These boys and girls exposed to manifold temptations, to whom this world is opening in all its inexhaustible attractiveness? These men and women on whom the brunt of the struggle for existence falls? Does God really expect them to be saints—how can He? He does, certainly, and can: and that because He does not expect the work to be wrought by mere human power, but because He Himself offers to make them what He calls them to be. He has given us His Holy Spirit; not, as we have seen,

to be an external law, but to be an indwelling friend and guide. He Himself will make us what He calls us to be. He can call us to be great in His kingdom, because He gives His omnipotent grace. It is God who worketh in us both to will and to do His good pleasure. Our timidity and discouragement come from failure to understand that in the last analysis the work is the work of God. It is the old story over again of the Apostle looking at the difficulties of circumstances and not the power of God, and being taught: "My grace is sufficient for thee." S. Paul begs that "the thorn in the flesh" may be removed. It seems to him to be hindering his work. But no; it is not so. No human thing can be a hindrance. Man's necessity is God's opportunity. The difficulty of life is to be met, not by struggling with it, but by struggling with God. We are asking all the time for the removal of obstacles: we should ask for more grace. We are netted about with hindrances—work, and family, and temperament—and we ask for room for free play of our powers. Not at all. We need grace. We need to call on God, not to free us, but to help us where and as we are. "My grace is sufficient for thee." We can conquer anything with God's grace; we

can conquer nothing without it. We can win the battle *where we are,* or nowhere.

For sanctity is unbounded strength. One would like to know where the impression came from that saints are a feeble folk, at serious disadvantage in this life. They are at a disadvantage, certainly, if by success we mean the esteem and favor of this world. But one cannot be said to have failed when he has not attained that he never wanted. And a saint surely does not want this world. But he is not therefore weak. His characteristics are the qualities of strength. He has that patient endurance that is the foundation of success in whatsoever one undertakes. He has that intuitive insight which chooses unerringly that which is of enduring value, which prevents him from being deceived by the mere surface glitter of life, and from wasting his energies on things of no profit. Is not the weakness of the ordinary life this: that it wastes its energies upon things essentially worthless? That it gives time and energy to things essentially frivolous? We do not really misjudge in this matter. No woman, of course, really believes that the afternoon spent in playing cards could not have been better spent; or that hour passed in idle talk would not have

been more profitably spent in meditation. No one for a moment imagines the possibility of putting such things in competition. The difference is that the person of devout life chooses that which any sane person recognizes to be the wise choice. But we dislike the reproach which others' wisdom casts upon our own folly. We choose to think of devout persons as being unduly strict and making unnecessary sacrifice only when we ignore or think lightly of the end they have in view. The friendship of God is worth any sacrifice we can make. The friendship of the world is worth—what? The enmity of God? That is what the Apostle says we pay for it.

We agree then, that we are not to be satisfied with anything less than personal holiness. How much is involved in that? Well, I have already quoted our Lord's summary of His teaching: "Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." So much would seem to be involved. But that can hardly mean perfection in degree. Our likeness to God must be proportionate to our own nature. We in our nature must be perfect as God in His nature is perfect. In other words, a nature attains perfection when it attains the end for which it exists, perfectly. A one-sided development, *e.g.*, is obviously an imperfect one.

Human nature attains its ends in a balanced development; in bringing to completeness of use all its faculties and capacities—making use of each for the end for which it is created.

Now that is precisely what we ordinarily fail to do. To confine ourselves to the spiritual side of things: we try to be holy in *spots*. We pay attention to some one or two things. There is nothing so common, when one talks to people about the spiritual life as to be told, in a defensive tone, Well, I do this or that. I say my prayers: I make my communions: I read my Bible. The tone implies, What more do you want? One really wants an appreciation of the spiritual life, as a life, and not as a group of actions. One is looking for a unity, not a patchwork. One or two desirable practices do not of necessity imply a central motive. Practices are desirable; but practices which spring out of a central motive—the motive of consecration—and not such as are out of harmony with the general trend of the whole life. It is not from one point of view of very much consequence that a worldly woman has not given up saying her prayers or going to church occasionally. It means probably a persistence of habit rather than a principle of devotion. And even where there is a principle there

is still the danger of one-sidedness. We have fixed upon some one special thing, and with earnestness sought to accomplish that. We have made a rule about prayer or communion which we have faithfully kept. That is well. But the danger is lest we make that serve for the whole spiritual life; lest we refuse to consider other aspects of that life. It is as though we conceived ourselves as paying a price for the favor of God, which accordingly we have paid, and decline to listen to any more demands whatever. The bargaining temper is much more common than we imagine. God is conceived as having limited rights. We will do so much and no more. We will sacrifice so much and no more.

We would do well, then, to examine ourselves at the outset as to our attitude toward the claims of God on life, and to get clear to us that holiness is, fundamentally, complete surrender. Partial surrender will not do, and that is what we are always trying to compromise on. Now and then a person will say plainly: God has no right to demand that—more think it, though they usually succeed in concealing the issue by substituting something for God. The demands of God are transformed in their minds into the demands of the Church, or more commonly, of the priest.

The priest has no right to ask that. That is all very well, but we do not have to give and work at the demands of a man. That, of course, is mere throwing the dust in the air, deceiving nobody but those who want to be deceived.

Or our attitude is one of hesitancy—as doubting just what God will demand next. We have not got clear to ourselves that God demands nothing; that all is His now. We are afraid of God; we draw back and say, Not that, O God. Not that habit; I have got so used to it. But the hand of God draws steadily nearer. It touches things very close to us. And still in our unsurrendered way we writhe and cling; Not that friendship, O God. Not that love! I can't give that! We are so slow to learn that the things we want are the things God wants, and we only have them safe after we have given them to Him.

What, after all, do we want with this world? What can we do with it? Sooner or later, there will sound over us that grim sentence—"We brought nothing into this world and it is certain we shall carry nothing out." At that hour we shall reck little of this world; we shall lie still and cold, unheeding; and our friends will go back, as we have gone back, unheeding too, to their farms and their merchandise, and think little

enough of the heavenly treasury. An invention of priests, that too, perhaps! But what do you want with this world, except as you can use it as an instrument to attain God? Much is said in these days to convince us of the desirability of this world—of this life. We are told that our business is here; that it is not simply foolish—it is wrong—it is treachery and cowardice—to despise this world. Which has its measure of truth. But then, who despises this world most: the one who tries to get all the personal enjoyment out of it he can for himself, or the one who tries to consecrate it to the service of its Maker? Christianity is sneered at as another worldliness. Other worldliness, forsooth! If you come to that, who precisely are the world's benefactors? The people immersed in this world to the lips? We are given to understand that they are the wise ones. The man who makes millions, nobody cares how —nobody blames him. It is the man who declines that life for a life of prayer and good works who is characterized as a fanatic. It is the sister who is spending twelve hours a day in prayer and ministry who is told she is shirking her duties as a member of society. The woman who spends her money in mere frivolity is wise! It is easy to talk humanitarian platitudes about saving the

world. So far as it is salvable, who *is* saving it? What makes it an endurable place at all? It is an amusing place no doubt for the prosperous—but taking the human race at large, it is a barely endurable world. There is perpetual struggle to small purpose. A miserable and naughty world, lying in wickedness, these words over which we smile in our youth, when pleasure smiles on every hand and joy seems inexhaustible, are very sober truth to us in later years—a miserable and naughty world. And what is being done anywhere to better its condition, save what is being done by those who are consecrating it to God?

Yet we cling to this world. Our hold loosens very hard. It is pitiful to see men and women going down to certain death, and fastening ever harder their hold upon this life. We are so slow to be convinced that we save our lives by losing them. And yet even here most things are gained by sacrifice. We gain what we give to God. It is possible to turn all life into matter of sacrifice.

How is it that we instinctively think of sacrifice as a distressing and a gloomy matter? It seems as though when one talked of sacrifice there arose a vision of men and women going grimly on under stern stress of duty to perform the infi-

nitely disagreeable. Surely that is an extraordinary view of sacrifice. It ought to occur to us that the quality of sacrifice—disagreeable or the reverse—is something we put into it. If you will think for a moment about your own lives you will understand what I mean. You have all made a sacrifice for your children or your parents, let us say. That is familiar ground. Do you think of those sacrifices with pain? Would you rather not have made them? Those things you gave up for your child or your mother—they are dead now, it may be—you regret those? It was pain then, and pain to remember them? Certainly not. But why not? *Because you loved.* There is the secret—there is the transforming power—love. Well, what God asks of you is not the sacrifice the heathen makes to his idol, in hideous fear of the consequences if he does not; but He asks the offering of love. God asks you to consecrate this world and this life to Him because of your love for Him. I suppose if you do not love Him He does not ask anything at all from you. What He asks, He asks as the evidence that you love Him more than it. And if you love you will give it.

So to consecrate one's self through sacrifice is very sweet. Sweet and gladsome in proportion

as the vision of God grows upon us. We look at the lives of God's Saints and we think they are lives of incredible hardness. But did the Saints find them so? It is written of them that they "endured as seeing Him who is invisible." They were sustained by the vision of God. It is unsanctified pain and suffering and hardness that are unendurable. The Peace of God takes away their sting. There was plenty that was hard in the life of the Blessed Virgin of whom it was prophesied that a sword would pierce her soul. There was plenty of suffering in the life of S. John. Yet we never think of them as other than lives of intense joy. The gifts of God to them were so much richer than the sacrifices of God required of them. And any life that truly gives itself in consecration shall find by experience the infinite riches of God. Did you ever know of anyone who had had experience of God wanting to go back from Him, or for a moment regretting what it had cost to attain peace with Him?

Let us then not think of the sacrifice that the possession of holiness involves as being hard and difficult. There are hard moments, to be sure, when the will is tearing itself loose from the world. The first steps are difficult when we are not sure of self and have not learned to trust God.

But the very effect of the self-devotion is to simplify the desires. When we are devoted to this life we desire so much, and so passionately. There are ever born within us new cravings demanding satisfaction. But when we have actually consecrated ourselves to God there is so little that we desire beside Him, or at least, out of Him. Even the world itself is a transformed place. He gives us back so much to enjoy in Him. The love of God is not a selfish but an overflowing love. He gives us back our human loves with a new depth and a new significance. He does not impoverish, He enriches human relations. How much more rich and significant is that love which is a love in Christ. How different is the unchristian family from the Christian. What added depth and fulness in the friendship which is not limited to things material, but has spiritual foundations as well. What permanency is given to all relations when they are based not on time but eternity. Over the purely earthly relation there is rolling even nearer the cloud which must finally embrace it—the cloud of its mortality. It is the unending pathos of human things that they end. The shadow of death hangs over them all. In God all things are made new. In Christ all pure things are made to partake of His own eter-

nity. Death is but a passing incident to a love which is a love in the Lord.

Holiness, self-consecration, then, puts life on an enduring basis of indestructible peace. That is what God calls us to do. That is why He has created us.

I do not wish to end in vagueness. One sometimes feels that exhortation and appeal which has no explicit guidance is worse than useless. One can imagine someone saying: What, then, am I to do? I have made, perhaps, some progress, but what is the next step? There, you see, is the difficulty; because the next step, while it is the practical thing, is always a personal and individual matter; the next step for one is too far or too short for another. The next step is a matter of individual concern, not of general instruction. Still, when a certain man drew a bow at a venture, he did hit the joint of the king's armor; and I will venture a few words.

Remember, then, that holiness is the result of union with our blessed Lord, and grows as that union grows in depth and intensity. It is the deepening and intensifying of it that is holiness. Now this union is wrought by the operation of the Holy Spirit through the Sacraments; our will by sacrifice conforming to the will of God and fol-

lowing it as it is made known to us. This union has been wrought in you. You have been baptized into Christ and made members of His Body. It has been developed in your confirmation which gave you the presence of the Holy Spirit as your guide and friend. It has been deepened by each worthy communion that you have made; it has been weakened by each act of sin. If the guilt of sin has been removed by absolution, at the same time with restored innocence, sanctifying grace has been added. So far all is plain. And the same process is to be continued. We trust largely to the sacramental action of the Holy Spirit. My own observation is that the steady practice of confession with its effect of cleansing and vivifying the spiritual faculties is of the greatest possible value. Frequent and devout communions, carefully prepared for and with definite intention, strengthen constantly the spiritual faculties. The spiritual life is just as orderly as the natural life, and is to be pursued with the same definiteness.

The sacramental side of life is for the purpose of deepening our union with Christ and gaining spiritual strength. That strength is of course given for use. We must use it in action for God; in other words, for good works. Our sacrifices have been largely to draw our will from this

world. Our energies must be used in consecrated activity. No one who follows out these two lines in the details of life can fail of constantly increasing sanctity.

With varying progress, however. There is another element—the intensity of our willing. We follow even the path of holiness with more or less eagerness. That is perhaps why all who are in a state of habitual grace do not develop in the same degree. Some love and seek God more vividly, with more passion than others. And in proportion to the intensity of our love we grow like that which we love. There is a transforming power in love, and the love of God shed abroad in our hearts transforms us into the likeness of the dear Son. We start very simply, it may be, not seeing our way very far; just offering ourselves to the will of God. If our offering has been whole-hearted and without reserves, much will come of it. God will become more to us and the world less. The sacrifices which loomed large on the horizon when we took our first hesitating steps —the sacrifices which we shrank from when we looked at them without experience—are almost easy when we make them. As our experience deepens God will make Himself known to us in unexpected ways, and that which we feared as the

rough way of denial proves itself to be the way of joyous service. Our souls sing as they go on. Our joy in God brightens the land all about us. Others feel in us the presence of an unseen source of joy and strength. For your true saint in the sense of his pardon and acceptance, is sunny-hearted, and the world he had renounced comes back to him as the place of his Father's service. It is still a world spotted and stained with sin—but it is a world, too, for which Christ died; a world in which the Holy Spirit is building the Kingdom of the Elect. Its sorrow and suffering are now not a weight upon him, but a stimulus to his action. He goes forth to labor, not now as its votary, but as the child of God to aid in the work of God. And the evil and the naughtiness of the world cannot chill him, if he has the peace of God in his heart.

But he works as one who desires a country. There does come at last a desire for God. What was at first a desire to perfect one's self—or desire to do right—or desire to do God's will—or desire to follow our Lord—does finally become a desire for God Himself. "My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God. When shall I come to appear before the Presence of God?" It may seem far off from us as yet; unreal to any present

experience; but that is the end we fare forward to. As more and more we let go our hold here there grows the desire to see the King in His beauty. The passion of holiness is born; the passion which will only be satisfied by the Beatific Vision. Not a passion of emotional disturbances —the saint becomes calmer, more self-recollected, more self-controlled—but a passion of *willing*, by which the soul eagerly seeks its home, and longs for the time when

"The golden evening brightens in the west;
And soon to faithful warriors cometh rest;
Sweet is the calm of paradise the blest.
Alleluia.

"From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast,
Through gates of pearl streams in the countless host,
Singing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
Alleluia."

O ever-blessed Spirit with whom is the well of life, and in whose light we see light; increase in us, we beseech Thee, the brightness of Divine knowledge, whereby we may be able to reach Thy plenteous fountain, impart to our thirsting souls the draught of life, and restore to our darkened

minds the light from heaven; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Grant us, O Lord the Comforter, not to mind earthly things, but to love things heavenly; and even now, while we are placed among those things that are passing away, to cleave to those which shall abide: through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

O Thou unto whose everlasting blessedness we ascend, not by the frailty of the flesh, but by the activity of the soul; make us ever, by Thine inspiration, to seek after the courts of the heavenly city, and, by Thy mercy, confidently to enter them: through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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Barry, J.G.H.

Meditations on the office

and work of the Holy Spirit

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